THE

MORRISONS.

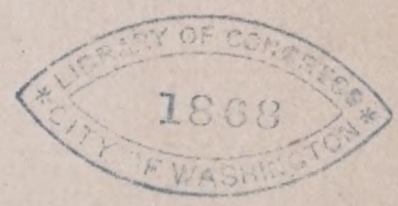
A

STORY OF DOMESTIC LIFE.

BY

MRS. MARGARET HOSMER.

AUTHOR OF "TEN YEARS OF A LIFETIME."



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To

MRS. SARAH JOSEPHA HALE,

THIS STORY

IS GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY ITS

AUTHOR.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

Coming Home,..... 13

CHAPTER II.

The Letter,..... 24

CHAPTER III.

Breakfast,..... 29

CHAPTER IV.

"Uncle Terry,"..... 37

CHAPTER V.

Berkely's Room,..... 45

CHAPTER VI.

Doctor Windell,..... 56

CHAPTER VII.

Addie West,..... 61

CHAPTER VIII.

Another Blow,..... 75

CHAPTER IX.

Tableaux,..... 83

CHAPTER X.

Bess a Debtor,..... 93

CHAPTER XI.

Bess acts a Play,..... 99

CHAPTER XII.

Wedded Bliss,..... 109

CHAPTER XIII.

Berkely does some business in Jewelry,..... 127

CHAPTER XIV.

Larry's Headache,..... 142

CHAPTER XV.

"Judith Killeth Holofernes,"..... 147

CHAPTER XVI.

The Shadow of a Wrong,..... 164

CHAPTER XVII.

A first Grief for Juliet,..... 168

CHAPTER XVIII.

Bess off Duty,..... 173

CHAPTER XIX.

Larry's View of Property,..... 177

CHAPTER XX.

Nell's Sentiments,..... 184

CHAPTER XXI.

Katie's Courtship,..... 193

CHAPTER XXII.

Katie Wins Her Game,..... 202

CHAPTER XXIII.

Little Barnes..... 206

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Travelers' Return..... 215

CHAPTER XXV.

The Wedding,..... 231

CHAPTER XXVI.

A Glimpse of Fortune,..... 227

CHAPTER XXVII.

Nelly's Dissipation,..... 232

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Uncle Terry's Dream,..... 237

CHAPTER XXIX.

Barnes' Confession of Faith,..... 242

CHAPTER XXX.

Charlotte's Protest,..... 245

CHAPTER XXXI.

All Together Once More,..... 250

CHAPTER XXXII.

Uncle Terry's Dream is read,..... 255

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A "Wake,"..... 258

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Fading,..... 262

CHAPTER XXXV.

Terrible Tidings,..... 268

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Double Trouble,..... 272

CHAPTER XXXVII.

One Scene Closes..... 279

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Bess's Fright,..... 287

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Doubts,..... 294

CHAPTER XL.

Dust to Dust,..... 300

CHAPTER XLI.

Oak Hill,..... 303

CHAPTER XLII.

Larry's Habits,..... 309

CHAPTER XLIII.

A Peace Party,..... 318

CHAPTER XLIV.

Penitence,..... 322

CHAPTER XLV.

Violence,..... 327

CHAPTER XLVI.

Its Effects,..... 333

CHAPTER XLVII.

Larry Sees a Ghost,..... 341

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Implicit Trust,..... 345

CHAPTER XLIX.

Misgivings,..... 349

CHAPTER L.

Larry Prays,..... 355

CHAPTER LI.

"That was Lost but now is Found,"..... 359

CHAPTER LII.

The Day Breaks,..... 365

CHAPTER LIII.

A Little Messenger,..... 367

CHAPTER LIV.

Larry is Chief Mourner,..... 369

CHAPTER LV.

"Bess Morrison,"..... 372

CHAPTER LVI.

Sunshine,..... 377

THE MORRISONS.

CHAPTER I.

COMING HOME.

In the dull chilly twilight of a wintry afternoon, Berkely Morrison, a young man but lately returned from China, found himself wandering in the streets of his native city. He had left the hotel at which he had arrived an hour before, with the intent to go directly to the house of his only living relations, to whom he bore a message, but coming upon street after street familiar to his boyhood, and being half sad, half curious to note the changes there—he had loitered on his way till night was closing round him. Remembering this, he changed his lingering step for a brisker one, and turned from the business streets where he had been jostled by homeward-bound business men, into the quiet precincts of Burleigh Place.

A comfortable, substantial row of brick houses rose on either side, with something very neat and cheerful in their uniformity. Each had white marble steps and facings, low parlor windows, broad door-ways, and large, well-shaken door-mats. In most of the windows shone reflected the clear warm glow of a grate fire, and through the half-closed curtains Berkely caught pleasant glimpses of home and homelike faces.

Consulting a card of direction, and trying to decipher numbers in the dim twilight, he found himself in front of the house he sought, the door of which bore a large plate with the name of "Morrison" upon it.

Now, that he stood there, a painful irresolution seized him, for he had taken a task upon himself that he shrank from, and eager to see the faces that had been dear to his boyhood, he dreaded the pain his coming might give them. Pausing on the door-step, he took a letter from his breast, considered it long and earnestly, and then putting it and his apparent reluctance away together, he rang the bell determinedly, and danced up and down meantime to keep his feet warm and prevent a return of indecision. He was still engaged in this pastime when glancing towards the door, he found it open, and a half-grown girl in a large-sized apron regarding him with a pair of large, questioning eyes.

"Were Mrs. Morrison and the young ladies at home?" Berkely asked.

"Yes, they was," the young attendant said; and she furthermore volunteered the information that "they was a dressin' for their tea, that Mrs. Morrison was up stairs and Miss Bess was in the kitchen, and the old man what was their uncle, he wasn't home yet."

"Jenny," cried a voice from above stairs at this point, "Jenny Brackett, open the parlor door and ask the gentleman to walk in."

Jenny obeyed, and said, as she did so, it being her nature to confide, "That's the old lady what's a-calling now—and she'll be down when I take up her cap what Miss Bess was fixing; she was a calling for it when you rung the bell."

When this young person retired, closing the door after her, Berkely found himself in a handsome parlor, opening by folding doors into another. Both were tastefully furnished and perfectly neat and well kept. There were pretty tables with elegantly bound books upon them, dark velvet sofas and easy chairs, graceful vases filled with fresh flowers, and a well-chosen picture or two on the walls. While he was yet looking with pleasure upon the cheerful comfort that surrounded him, the door opened again, and a good-looking old lady, with something very genial and youthful for her years about her, stood before him. She had quick, dark eyes, with which she looked at him

inquiringly, while she dropt a courtesy of old-fashioned politeness, but no recognition.

"Of course, you don't know me, aunt," said Berkely. "I am Lawrence Morrison's son who went to China fifteen years ago."

At his first words Mrs. Morrison threw up her hands with an expression of genuine astonishment, then seizing him by both of his, she cried out in a pleasant voice, that had an unmistakable Irish accent in it:

"Well, by this and by that, I'm proud to see you, Berkely Morrison! It's a warm welcome your father's son deserves from me, setting aside the blood relation that you are, for he was ever a friend to them that needed one, and there's many a one alive this day to say the same." With this she shook his hands fervently, and the tears sprang to her eyes with real pleasure as she looked at him.

"Oh, then, but I must away up stairs, and tell the girls," she said, breaking off and hurrying to the door.

"Jenny," she cried, "Jenny Brackett, fly up and tell the girls to come away down and see their cousin. Stop, Jenny, I'll go up myself, for they'll never know it's you till I explain it to them, Berkely dear. Sure," she added, returning, "it must have been at New York you landed, and it's a wonder you saw nothing of Larry. He's there these five months past about a new business he's gone into."

"I did see Larry," replied Berkely, "and it was his kind assurance, dear aunt, that you had not forgotten me, and that I might hope for a kindly welcome, gave me courage to drop down on you thus, unexpected and unannounced. I can't tell you," he added, with a flushed cheek, "how your hearty warmth affects me. I have been a wanderer and an alien so long, that a touch of home or home feeling goes straight to my heart."

"Oh, then, but it's yourself may look for both from us, darling. You were but a slip of a lad when I saw you last, still you had a look of your father about you. You've kept it yet, and sure if my heart was stone that would melt it. It's to your own house you've come, Berkely dear—and now I'll fly up and tell the girls."

"God bless her; this is pleasant," thought Berkely, as she bustled away all excitement. "It looks like home, indeed, and a charming home, too; no sign of Irish thriftlessness here; my aunt must have abjured her country in all except its warmth and language. Ah, my cousins, I had forgotten them; it may be their taste and neatness that has touched everything."

"The girls will be here this minute," said Mrs. Morrison, returning as breathlessly as she had gone. "They were delighted entirely to hear of your being back. They were little critters when you left, but they've heard of you and yours many's the time from me."

"I remember them perfectly the day I came with my father to say good bye," said Berkely. "It was in the summer time, and they were dressed in white. Katy had a large doll, and she put it down to come and kiss me when I was going, but Nelly hid her face behind you and wouldn't speak to me."

"See that, now," cried his aunt; "Katy minds it, too, and speaks of it; but Nelly was weakly and spoilt. We had been in this country but a little time then, and she was always laid up with some rash or other—the heat sat sore on her."

"I suppose," said Berkely, smiling, "there will be no trace of the little girls I left, in the handsome young ladies Larry tells me they have grown to be."

"Well, indeed, their looks are well enough," returned his aunt. "But," she added, quickly, "did Larry speak to you about Bess—Bess Saunders—my half-sister's daughter? God knows she's been like my own child to me, and I make no differ between them in my heart."

"I hope Miss Saunders is well," he answered, with a slight change in his voice and manner. "I meant to have asked before. Larry told me you had every reason to esteem and love her."

While he was yet speaking, a young girl, tall and well formed, with a pale, clear complexion, and very dark eyes that contrasted rather oddly with almost flaxen hair, entered the room with a quick, buoyant step, but stopped hurriedly on seeing a stranger there.

"Why, then, Bess, was it in the kitchen you were, and me to

be looking for you all over the house, and never to think of it? This is Berkely Morrison, that you've heard many a talk about, and he's come back from China and has been in New York for months past, though Larry, the limb, never made mention of it. But to tell you the truth, Berkely, it's little we've heard from Larry lately anyhow, and I've often thought strange of the same."

"He has been very busy," said Berkely, confusedly, "and I think I am to blame for not being mentioned. I preferred to come unheralded as I have done."

"Where is Nelly and Katie, aunt?" asked Bess, who had been watching Berkely, and now broke in, to his evident relief.

"Well, I'm afraid they're just fashing themselves dressing, out of compliment to their cousin, though I bid them never to heed, but come as they were."

At the mention of dress, Berkely glanced at Bess, who wore a dark calico gown and an ample gingham apron, about which she evinced no confused consciousness whatever, nor made any attempt to remove it. In another moment her plain attire contrasted greatly with the elegance of her cousins', who entered gracefully, smiling, and blushing, with extended hands, which, as Berkely grasped fervently, filled him with admiration for their whiteness, softness and delicacy. "Larry may well be proud of them," he thought; "they are certainly very lovely," and their easy amiability completed the charm and entirely captivated him. They were not excessive talkers, and with their mother before him, Berkely could scarcely wish them to be, but they said exactly what was appropriate, and were so interested when he spoke, laughed such sweet little girlish laughs when he recalled their early associations, and described the coral bracelets and red morocco shoes that were inseparable in his recollection from Nelly, how Kate looked dignified in a frilled spencer at four years of age, and what a great awkward boy he felt beside them in his new broadcloth suit. They formed a circle round the glowing fire, Mrs. Morrison in an easy chair in the corner, and Berkely at her side, while his pretty cousins sat opposite. The red coals shed a cheery, pleasant light on their

faces, and their hearts seemed opened to kindly, cordial feeling. The fifteen long years that spanned the past and present melted away and they were one. A foreign land and business cares seemed a dream to Berkely, and a happy fireside that had always been his dearest hope, seemed real.

"Aunt," he said, being warmed into courage to make the proposition by the kindness that beamed in their eyes, "I want to live with you—not to stay on a visit or come back and see you, but to really live and abide here, as Larry did. He will write to you about it, and has given me his right and title to his room. Don't say no, but let his mantle fall on me; I want to be a second Larry."

"Why, then, God bless me, but you're entirely welcome. Though why should you speak of Larry, as if he had gone and we should never lay eyes on him again?"

Mrs. Morrison was a picture of excited astonishment as she asked the question, and she added, tremblingly:

"What is the boy up to; has any harm happened him?"

Berkely glanced round hastily, colored, and seemed vexed with himself.

"No, no," he said quickly. "Certainly not; he is perfectly well; nothing but my anxiety that you should not refuse me, could pardon my giving you such an impression."

"Well, God be thanked!" said his aunt. "It's glad I am there's nothing wrong with Larry, and for myself, I'll be proud to have you under the roof with me, and so will Bess, I'm sure."

Bess was not there, she had left the room almost as her cousins entered it, and her sudden appearance now, with a lamp in her hand, seemed to disturb him, for he became constrained and preoccupied.

"Bess is such a house-wife, cousin Berkely," said Nelly, "that we never can induce her to sit down quietly till tea is over."

"Can I do anything to assist you, dear?" asked Kate, who had a stately graciousness of manner that seemed quite sufficient without any action whatever.

"Thank you; Jenny will ring in a moment," answered Bess.

"Cousin," cried Nelly, who wore little short curls, and was

altogether of an arch and naive style of beauty, "are ladies industrious in China? But of course they are not, or they wouldn't bandage their feet as they do. Well, then, be prepared to be astonished and entranced with our Bessie, for she is perpetual motion adapted to household purposes."

"Well, Nelly," broke in her mother, "this I'll say, that if things were left for you to do, they would be left indeed."

"Yes, mother, I know that's true, but I have my own department, you see. Who would attend to the gracefully ornamental and generally agreeable part of the establishment if I didn't? But there's our infallible Jenny ringing the bell, and cousin Berkely must have an appetite, coming all the way from China as he does."

As they passed out into the hall on their way to the dining-room, obedient to Jenny's summons, they encountered an old man with white hair, leaning on a cane, who had just entered, and was turning round to close the street-door after him.

"Sure, Berkely, it's my old uncle Terrence Blake," said Mrs. Morrison. "You mind him well, I know; but wait a bit till we see if he knows where to place you."

Turning, she accosted the old man, in a tone of voice that showed him to be very deaf indeed, with "Uncle Terrence, dear, who is this I'm showing you; did ever you see him before?"

He turned on being spoken to, and looked sharply at Berkely, who stood smiling before him.

"Well," said the old man, "it's many a day since I saw Lawrence Morrison, but if he has a son alive, sure it's him I have by the hand now."

"Of course, uncle," cried Mrs. Morrison, delightedly. "It's what I told himself when I first clapped my eyes on him; says I, you're your father's son, and you need no better recommendation than that to any one who ever knew him. Well, the girls are gone into tea and we may as well go too, and have our chat at the table."

With this, Berkely followed his aunt into the dining-room, which he found as comfortable and scrupulously neat as the parlors they had left. A table, where spotless linen, pretty china,

and inviting delicacies were temptingly arranged, stood in the centre of the room ; in one recess of the fire-place there was a small side-board, in the other a book-case, and between the prettily curtained windows stood a sewing table, that gave the apartment something of the air of a ladies' sitting room. Over the mantle-piece was a picture of Larry, as handsome a fellow as need be, with a bright Irish eye, and a rich Irish complexion. Berkely was looking at this, and thinking how like him it was, when his cousin Nelly said : "Take Larry's place, Berkely, he always sits next to me. Then you'll be near mother, and, opposite us, uncle Terrence, who will talk to you about 'home,' as they call the United Kingdom, till you are glad to turn to me for relief."

Berkely laughingly took the seat offered to him, and his aunt placing herself at the tea-board went through the ceremony of pouring tea. It was only a ceremony with her, for as she talked incessantly, her niece held the cups and checked her hand when, full of her theme, she would have overflowed the saucer, saw each one served, and dispensed the cream and sugar.

"There, aunt," she said at last, "you have waited on every one, and here is your own cup."

"It's none too strong, Bess dear, and I think you'd better steep a grain more — since Berkely's from the tea country and will maybe turn up his nose at our brewing. Is it true, Berkely dear, that they draw it as bitter as the gall itself, and drink it off without ever a taste of anything to give it a flavor ?"

"I like it best this way, aunt, I can assure you," said Berkely, and Mrs. Morrison clapped her hands, triumphantly crying :

"See that, now ; I knew that none of your name could fall into the unchristian ways of barbarians."

Through the open door Berkely saw the kitchen stove polished and shining like everything else ; the dresser with its well scoured tins ; the white pine table and painted floor. "Who can do all this," he thought ; "not that little minx," as his eye fell on Jenny Brackett rocking violently in a sewing chair under cover of the unusual excitement. "Nor my delicate-handed cousins," as the young ladies, with native cordiality, pressed him

to partake of everything. "It must be Miss Saunders who does the Cinderella business, and wears a brown apron in consequence."

Of herself, this young lady possessed but little interest in his eyes, her light hair and dark eyes were so new a style to him that he could scarcely decide whether he thought her pretty or otherwise; she had spoken so little, and seemed so preoccupied whilst his cousins were so vivacious that he would not have given her a thought were it not that he had undertaken a message from Larry to her, that was the single drop of bitter in his cup of welcome. He had little time to think; the flood gates of Mrs. Morrison's recollections were opened, and a steady stream of reminiscences of grandfather, great-grandfather, and aunts and uncles of both sides, poured down upon him. Sometimes old Terrence Blake added another generation's annals, and then the banks overflowed and almost overwhelmed him, till Kate or Nelly came to his rescue.

"There was a laboring man of the name of Tim Dougherty lived on your grandfather's place, Berkely," said uncle Terrence as they rose from the table. "Did ever you hear your father mention him? No! well, I'll tell you about him when we go into the parlor, for it's a great story entirely."

"No you shan't, uncle Terry," said Nelly, "for cousin Berkely is going to devote himself to me till bed time. Bessie's friends the Daceys, are coming to spend the evening, and we'll review China while Kate does the music and Bess the conversation."

Passing through the hall, they lingered under the lamp a while to look at a little ivory plate with a drawing of some Chinese sea-port on it, which Kate had kept for years, hoping it was a view of Berkely's place of exile. In the room they had left he could see Bess hurrying about clearing the table, and rearranging the furniture, assisted by Jenny.

"No wonder she doesn't talk," he said, "she is too busy to waste time in words."

"If you have taken the notion to have Larry's room, I suppose there's no turning you, but Berkely dear, sure it's at the top of the house, as I may say, and we have a spare room to the fore, which Bess thinks will be more to your liking." So said

Mrs. Morrison, lamp in hand, as she invited her nephew to take a view of his new apartment.

"Larry's room, by all means," returned he; "the spare chamber is for guests, and you remember, that was what I expressly stipulated against; I am to be a fixture—a part of the household you promised me."

On the first landing the old lady paused.

"It's a comfortable home we have, Berkely, as you see, and a grateful heart I have for it. You were but a boy when you went away, and knew but little of how things went. So, to make a long story short, and let you know who we are beholden to, beside your own dear father, I must tell you. When the failing of one Bleach Green broke your uncle Bernard, in the old country, nothing would do but we must all come over to America, where your father was able and willing to help us. Well, we came, and he took us under his care, and when Bernard closed his eyes on this world, it was with an easy heart, knowing that we were beyond want any way. We sent Larry off to boarding school by your father's advice, and me and the little girls staid together, till about six years ago, when I found out by chance that a half-sister of my own, who had married a Scotchman of the name of Saunders, was living in America too. Her husband was a merchant in Glascow when last I heard of her, but when I came to find out all, they had been living here for nearly twenty years. She was a widow and comfortably off, with but one child—our Bess here. Her health was failing, and before a year went over her head from the time I first found her, she was lying in the churchyard with the grass above her. It was a sore day for Bess when we laid her mother in the grave, and it was many a long month before I could see any hope of her living through her grief or getting over it. She was only a young cultie, but she took it to heart wonderfully. At last she seemed to rise out of it, and turned to me as a second mother. God knows, she's been more than a daughter to me. This is her house we're living in, and that was what I was explaining to you. If I was a royal queen I could not be more attended to in every wish, than I am by Bess Saunders. She makes everything

even, as she calls it, by saying she has her home with us—but that's just talk ; it's little luxury or grandeur we should have if it were not for Bess."

She paused, with her hand on the lock of the front chamber, saying—

"This is the spare room, and I'm mighty pleased you'd rather have Larry's, for I've a notion it will not be long before him and Bess will be nearer than cousins, and the best room isn't too good for them, I'm sure. God knows," she added, looking round with the lamp raised in her hand that Berkely might see the elegance of the spare room, "God knows it is the wish of my heart to see Bess Saunders, Larry's wife."

Without speaking, Berkely passed out, and Mrs. Morrison, before going up stairs, paused, and pointing to the back chamber, said:

"That's my own lodging room, and this one next to it, and over the dining-room, is Bess's ; but come away up, for Larry and the girls have the upper floor to themselves. It's a good big room," she said, when they had reached it ; "and here is a little one at the side for his boots and brushes. Larry used to take comfort to himself in this same room, and the wonder is that he can keep away from us and it as long as he has."

"It's a charming room, aunt," said Berkely, at last, "and I am a lucky fellow to fall heir to it. Why, what a handy fellow Larry is, to be sure, with all these contrivances. I can't sufficiently appreciate all I inherit until I take possession and examine it at leisure. Let me sit down here a moment, aunt, I see Larry has a writing desk, and I have a letter that must be attended to. I'll not detain you, aunt, but follow you down stairs in a few moments."

Left alone, which was what he desired, he took out the same letter that had occasioned his former irresolution, turned it over and over again, got up and closed the door, and sat down again, laying it before him on the table, and regarding it ruefully meantime.

"Larry did not tell me all this," he thought. "He said she was kind, and good, and devoted to his mother, but not the help and stay of the family, as I find she is. I wish it were all over."

CHAPTER II.

THE LETTER.

After a while Berkely went down stairs and found the parlor full of company. The expected Daceys had arrived, and were a very pretty pair of young ladies with a fine looking mother; there were besides another young lady, two or three gentlemen, one of whom was twirling round on the piano-stool preparatory to commence playing a waltz, as Berkely entered. His cousins had been talking of him evidently, for the company were expecting him, and received his introduction with a reflection of the pleasure felt by his relations. Perhaps he might have preferred a quiet evening, but he was in no mood to cavil, and seating himself by his aunt, looked round with delight on the graceful forms that began to fly by him in a waltz.

"Sure, Berkely, it's not what I was used to myself when I was young, such spinning round like tops till you're too weak and giddy to stand on your feet," said Mrs. Morrison, censoriously; "but the girls is just daft about it."

"It looks very pretty, aunt," answered Berkely. "But where is Miss Saunders?"

"Is it Bess? Why there she is, fornient you on the sofa, talking to old Dr. Dacey. He's a great chemist, you see, and Bess has a wonderful delight in drawing talk out of him."

Berkely was astonished; here was a new feature in his Cinderella, for the lady opposite him, with the dark eyes and light hair of Miss Saunders, bore no other trace of her. A dress of rich crimson and black brocade, made in elegant style, displayed the handsomest arms and shoulders he had ever seen, and she wore, besides, a necklace and bracelets, too brilliant, it seemed to him, for anything short of a court dress. Her manner had changed as completely as her appearance; she was full of life and vivacity, laughed a clear loud laugh, very unlike the gentle sweetness of her cousin's, and was so different in every way, that

Berkely could do nothing but follow her with his amazed glance.

By and by she left the room for a little while, and Berkely had just come to the conclusion that, possessed of two characters, she put off the housewifely one with the brown apron, and assumed the grand lady with the brocade. When she returned, preceding Jenny, each carrying a tray with refreshments, Mrs Morrison rose and displaced everything within reach, in the evident persuasion that she was assisting her niece, who, on Berkely's attempting to relieve her, said quietly, "No, thank you," and placed her waiter and Jenny's on a table she had arranged to receive them before leaving the room.

It must have been a matter of course for her to wait on and serve the guests with cake and wine, for neither of the young ladies attempted to interfere with or assist her in any way. One thing struck him particularly, that the moment Miss Saunders became busy she lost her gay, buoyant manner, and became so quietly concentrated on what she did, that there was something of severity in her face meantime.

There was a young gentleman present, (it was he who had discovered the musical turn and played waltzes) who, on receiving a glass of wine said, "'Tis not so sweet as woman's lip, but ah! 'tis more sincere." He had rather long hair and wore an eye-glass, so Berkely, having heard him remark before, "Bid me discourse, I will enchant thine ear," concluded quotations to be his style and stock in trade. His name was Little, an appropriate name, thought Berkely, when he overheard him call Miss Saunders "Hebe," and kneel before her, glass in hand, begging to be her Ganymede. Her cool "Not any, thank you, Mr. Little; I would have taken some had I wished it," together with her colorless face and inky black eyes, were such a contrast to his rosy compliments that Berkely could have laughed outright.

The little groups that had talked to each other all the evening now broke up, and a general conversation on travelers and traveling took their place, in which Berkely found himself chief oracle. Miss Saunders, with a mind entirely relieved from household cares, threw herself into discourse with eagerness,

questioning him on all variety of subjects connected with celestial experience, and setting him right from books that he had never heard of.

"What an uncomfortable young lady," thought he; "she has read everything, while I have only seen a little." And he wished devoutly that her kitchen stove might explode, or her kettle boil over.

But no such thing occurred, and she had begun to talk, and her cousin sank into insignificance before her. She had an odd kind of originality about her that was half witty, half grotesque, and made every one laugh without the least apparent effort. She told so many stories that were so much more curious and amusing than anything Berkely had ever heard, that he began to feel he must have dreamt his fifteen Chinese years away in some obscure corner, while she had been a true and adventurous explorer.

"Still," he thought, as his eye followed her in the midst of the leave-takers, who were protesting what a charming evening they had passed, "still, she is not a charming girl, and her cousins are. Yes, she draws good tea, dresses splendidly, has a finely cultivated mind, but she isn't agreeable. No, she is not agreeable"——

She came over to the sofa where he sat. Nelly and Kate had run up to the front chamber to assist Miss Little in finding an ear-ring she had dropped in removing her bonnet; Mrs. Morrison had gone into the dining-room, and they were alone together.

"This is my opportunity," thought Berkely, and he put his hand in his breast pocket, found his letter, but suddenly losing the power of forming his thoughts into the proper words, he stayed his hand and looked at her in embarrassed silence.

"I am heartily glad you're going to live with us, Mr. Morrison; apart from the pleasure your society will be to us, the thought of having you under her roof has made my aunt so happy that I am sure we are all obliged to you for proposing it."

She spoke in a quiet, earnest way, and paused, looking at him

steadily ; so Berkely thought, "She knows I have something to tell, and is waiting to hear it. It must be said sooner or later, why not now ?"

He had determined to soften what he had to tell by an explanation, and had begun by, "Miss Saunders, Larry begged me to give you an account of his plans and prospects, trusting to your presenting them in their best light to his mother," when her quick, inquiring eyes read the direction of the letter he held, and she took it from his hand.

"Do not read it yet," he said earnestly. "Wait till you have heard me for a moment ;" but her impetuous fingers had burst the seal, and thrown aside the envelope. The first line—the first words seemed to tell the story, for a strange glaring red shot all over her face, and dying away left it ghastly white.

She read on for a moment more, and the glow came back again, and with it a wild, tigerish light in her eyes ; she sprang up and threw the paper on the ground, and trampled it under her feet.

"Curse him, the wretch, the faithless wretch !" she cried, in a voice that rage had made harsh and unnatural. In the midst of her transport she stopped suddenly, and shuddered from head to foot ; then she sat down quietly, and looked on the ground like a person just awakening from a trance. In great distress of mind, Berkely rose to leave her. She stopped him.

"Wait a moment," she said, in a faint, altered voice. "Is there no mistake ; did Lawrence Morrison give you that for me ?" She pointed to the crumpled letter at her feet, but did not look towards it.

"Yes," he answered, "but God knows I did not understand its meaning when I brought it."

He stopped, for his aunt's voice in the hall calling "Bess, Bess dear," filled him with pity for the figure before him, that a few cruel moments seemed to have turned to stone.

"Will you step up, Bess, darling, and see if everything is right in Larry's room for Berkely ? I've been up myself, but I'm no hand at fixing things, as you know."

Berkely interposed.

"Oh, aunt, pray don't trouble Miss Saunders," he said. "I'm sure everything is in capital order."

He took up something from the table beside him; it chanced to be a pretty shell; and meeting his aunt by the door, turned her towards the light to admire it with him. Miss Saunders went out quietly behind them; still he lingered, talking and listening, hoping to tire his aunt, so that she would go direct to bed, and see her niece no more that night.

"Berkely, dear, sure you must be worn out for want of the sleep," said Mrs. Morrison, yawning herself, "and me keeping you here starved with cold, for there's not a spark left in the grate. Good night, and a good rest to you."

They parted at her room door, and he went up the second flight of steps slowly and thoughtfully, looking on the carpet and tracing the figures on it till he reached the top. There, in his doorway, Miss Saunders stood, waiting for him. She drew him in, and closed it.

"That is my cousin's room," she said, pointing to the back of the chamber; "stand here by the window and talk low, I want to speak to you."

Her own voice was little more than a whisper, and all her wild excitement had gone. She laid the lamp on a stand near the door, walked over to the other end of the room, and stood in the shadow of the curtains. Berkely followed, and took his place beside her, but did not look into her face.

"The letter I read from my cousin, Lawrence Morrison, to-night, shocked and surprised me very much. I am not so fortunate as to be able to control myself at all times, and I have to ask your pardon for not being able to do so then."

She said this in a dull, monotonous way, and then paused a little while.

"There is something else to be attended to, of far more serious importance than any nervous folly of mine. It is this, he is about to marry a lady who is a stranger to his family; they must be told of it, and prepared in every possible way to receive her kindly. Will you help me to do this?"

"Yes."

"Then tell them in the parlor in the morning before they come to breakfast; speak of the lady as if she were your dearest friend; say all that you know and all you can think in her favor, and combat all they can imagine against her."

"I will; you may rely on me, Miss Saunders."

"There is something else."

She stopped and thought a little.

"Would you mind letting them suppose I hear it then for the first time? It would be a favor to me—one I should always remember."

He looked up and met her large eyes, that watched his with a humble eagerness that her voice did not betray. He answered her with a fervor that he hoped showed how anxious he was to serve her, and she said, "thank you," and stole out of his room, closing the door in a noiseless way, leaving him to spend a wakeful, troubled night, full of self-reproach for his own readiness to accept a task of whose importance he knew nothing, and anxiety as to the reception of what he had to tell in the morning.

CHAPTER III.

BREAKFAST.

Like all ill-resting people, Berkely fell into a deep, exhausted sleep towards morning, from which he awoke with the startled impression that it must be nearly midday, and that some one had been endeavoring to arouse him by knocking at his door. He dressed hastily, and hurried down stairs to find the parlors empty and disarranged as he had left them the night before. He wandered from the front windows to the center table, picked up the books, and read the names on their covers for a little while, and then he began to think he had mistaken the time, and that his aunt was a late riser, when he heard sounds of hurrying

and bustling about in the dining-room. By and by the door opened, and his aunt looked in.

"Is it there you are, Berkely? good morning to you dear," she said. "Come away in to the fire and warm yourself."

"Oh, mother, pray don't, and we'll frighten cousin Berkely in this trim," cried two demurring voices; to which the mother made answer:

"Never fear, girls, the cold will be worse on him than the sight of a couple of check aprons."

"Oh, yes," cried Berkely, "I promise not to be alarmed, and the scent of the coffee and the glow of the fire are not to be resisted this sharp morning."

There was a little screaming and a good deal of laughing following this, and Berkely found himself in the presence of his two cousins in the exceptionable aprons tied over their pretty morning dresses, and their large sleeves, trimmed with quilted silk, pinned up to their shoulders, deep in the mysteries of cooking breakfast.

Mrs. Morrison and Jenny Brackett were setting the table jointly, and disagreeing as to the destination of every second dish they placed on it.

"It's the most unlucky thing in the world, isn't it, cousin Berkely; poor Bess has been ill all night with neuralgia, and had to go back to her room again," said Nelly, "and here are Kate and I left with breakfast on our hands, with about as much knowledge of cooking as we have of navigation."

"Jenny," cried Mrs. Morrison, "if you don't let the things stop where I put them, I'll cuff your ears for you. Take a seat by the fire, Berkely. It's a thing that never happened before in my knowledge of Bess; the poor thing is like a ghost this morning for want of the sleep. Nelly, is it burning the bread or toasting it you are?"

"Mother," exclaimed Nelly in desperation, "it will drive me mad; I've burnt my fingers a dozen times, and two more slices will put me in an insane asylum. When it's getting brown, and I think another minute will finish it, it turns black and shrivels up in an instant, just to provoke me."

"There, let me help you," entreated Berkely, "that's something I can do, for I've made toast often."

"Will you? oh, that's so good in you. Kate set me at it because she happens to know how to make coffee; uncle Terry taught her."

Mrs. Morrison paused in a violent discussion with Jenny to exclaim, at this point:

"Will any one tell me if your uncle has had his cup of coffee yet? Oh, Katie, Katie, with all your love for him you need Bess to keep you in mind of it."

"I have not forgotten it at all, mother," said Katie; "but it is not ready yet—it takes time to make coffee properly."

"Just listen to her!" said Nelly, laughing. "The air with which she says 'make coffee properly.' Now, if she were broiling ham as I am, she might be excused for a little exultation in her success. Don't look at me, Berkely, or you'll burn the bread; and, mother, please come and see why it sticks to the gridiron."

"Indeed, Nell, I have my own hands full with the eggs. I have been making an omelet after Bessie's way, and some how I can't mind how she stirs it up together."

"Oh, here's Miss Bess," exclaimed Jenny, excitedly; "I'm so glad! They was getting things so crooked, Miss Bess, and just look at the table, and see how Miss Morrison has set the plates."

Some feeling which he could not name, kept Berkely from looking up as she entered the room, but when he heard her laugh a natural hearty laugh, he took courage and turned round, toasting fork in hand, to greet her. She was standing in the middle of the floor, looking from one to the other, still laughing as he did so; but her merriment went no farther than her voice, her face was too white and wretched looking to be touched by it. She had tied a black lace scarf or veil loosely over her head, and her forehead was marked in red streaks by the chloroform with which she had bound it up, either to subdue real pain or as a subterfuge for her apparent wretchedness.

"If my miserable, sleepless looking face doesn't distress you all, I'll come and help," she said. "It's dreadfully late, and there's poor uncle Terry, Katie, positively roaring for his coffee."

"I'll take it to him now," said Katie; "but do in pity see to Nelly, she's dropping the ham in the ashes, and smothering us all with the smell."

In a moment or two, Berkely was the only one who had not resigned in favor of Bess: he kept on steadily toasting slice after slice, while Jenny buttered and arranged them on the plate Nelly, her apron discarded and sleeves unpinned, stood beside him, playing idly with the tassels of her gown, and commending his perseverance. Mrs. Morrison, after some sympathy and ex postulation with Bess about exerting herself, had quietly betaken herself to her natural employment of talking a great deal, and doing very little.

"There, Jenny ring the bell, please," said Bess; "and, aunt, if you will pour out the coffee, I'll run up and bathe my head again."

Berkely had risen from his completed task, and was assisting Jenny in placing chairs, as she passed through the dining-room. She touched him lightly on the arm, and said, "Now," in a whisper, then hurried away, as Katie and her uncle came in, and the family sat down to breakfast.

"They tell me Bessie's ailing, this morning," said uncle Terrence; "I knew something had happened her or we wouldn't be left starving till this time of day. I thought the life would lave me before I could get my drop of coffee."

"Now, uncle, that's unkind," said Katie; "it's only half past nine now, and I'm sure you were dozing when I knocked at your door."

"It's likely I was," he said, "for being wake with hunger I was glad to take refuge in sleep. But, Berkely, how are you? are you famished entirely? Not a word of talk could we have last night. When Katie sets to thumping on the piano, and th rest get their heels going, I just take a candle in my hand an slip off to my own room where I can have a smoke and my book in peace."

"Where is your room, uncle Terrence," asked Berkely; "I couldn't imagine where you disappeared to."

"Well, this I'll say," interposed Mrs. Morrison, "that it's out

of no disrespect to uncle Terry that he's there, for it's there he would be and no place else, but his lodging-room is no more nor less than the garret."

"It's my choice of all the house, Peggy," returned uncle Terry, "so keep yourself easy about it. Sure," he continued, turning to Berkely, "the smell of a pipe would entirely destroy these young ladies' nerves, and there I have only to shut my door, and puff away with my window open, and they never find a whiff of it."

"Well, but that minds me of Larry," said Mrs. Morrison; "he was the boy for the smoking, dear, dear! but I'll be glad to clap my eyes on him."

"Larry," said Berkely, who had been making and discarding different forms of speech in his own mind for this announcement ever since Bess had left the room, "Larry is going to surprise you all."

"How, Berkely dear," cried his aunt, laying down her knife and fork, and gazing at him anxiously. "How do you mean? speak up, man dear, and don't distract us."

Berkely glanced furtively round him, and took in all the eager eyes that were turned on his, then he said, desperately, "By getting married."

A perfect crash of questions followed. "How, when, who told you, are you jesting? Is he coming?" etc. Amidst which, his aunt, who had not spoken, laid her hand upon his arm, and bending her eyes on him, asked in a low voice, "Who is she?"

"A very lovely young lady; one whom you will all admire, I know. An heiress, besides—think of that—with the prettiest name imaginable—Juliet Waters."

No one spoke. Mrs. Morrison's face was shaded by her hand, and she sat perfectly still and ominously quiet; the young ladies looked down into their cups in silence, and Uncle Terrence's eyes were fixed on the mother. Berkely looked round in dismay, when his eye lighted on Jenny Brackett, in the kitchen doorway, the toasting fork she had been wiping in one hand, and the dish-towel in the other, her mouth and eyes equally wide open in astonishment.

"Come, come," he said; "one would think I had been telling you Larry was dead or ruined, instead of happy for life."

"God be good to me," cried Mrs. Morrison, at last, in a shower of tears. "I never doubted but Larry knew the wish of my heart, and that it was as near to him as it was to me. But Bess, darling, you were too good for him, too good for him."

She said this in a broken, passionate way, and rising from the table, turned to leave the room, when the door opened and Bess met her face to face.

"Bess, dear," she cried out, "Larry's gone off to be married to a stranger that none of us have ever laid eyes on, and its just broke my heart." With that she laid her head on Bess's shoulder, and sobbed like a child.

"Miss Saunders," said Berkely, "I am most unfortunate in finding what I naturally supposed would be joyful tidings has given pain to my dear aunt; but I positively assure you and my cousins, that the young lady Larry has chosen is every way worthy of their affection, and will soon gain it for herself, when they have seen her."

"Larry going to be married!" exclaimed Bess. "Well, it is hard to realize; everything sudden is; but I don't see why we are to be grieved as well as astonished."

Here Nelly and Kate exchanged looks of surprise, and Nelly, with a flush face, said, rather angrily:

"Well, if you take it so coolly, Bess, it must be right, but I am forced to own I *am* astonished."

"Aunt, dear aunt," cried Bess, without glancing towards her cousins. "There are few things in this world worth the tears you are shedding now; don't make Larry's young wife the cause of them; it is a bad omen for her, and Mr. Morrison says we will all admire her when we see her."

"Oh, Bess, Bess, thank God that you can say so. You're heart-whole, any way, darling, and that is something, but it's a sore disappointment to me."

Bess led her aunt to a chair, and gently forcing her into it, knelt beside her for a moment, with her arms around her and

her head upon her bosom. It was only for a moment, for when Mrs. Morrison would have held her there, she broke away and fell to laughing.

"I declare," she cried, "it's enough to tempt me to turn nun instead of getting married—just through fear of one's sister-in-law. I never saw Nell or Kate look savage before. Remember, girls, you'll have to be reviewed by your husband's families and make the ordeal as light as possible for poor Miss Waters."

"Bess," said Kate, reprovingly, "one would think you perfectly heartless, to hear you. Of course, you are not Larry's sister, and cannot be expected to feel as we do; still, I should think your knowledge of life would teach you the unpleasantness of having a perfect stranger take a place in your home, and make you accommodate yourself to her."

"Larry will never bring his wife to live here; we shall all be spared that."

Bess said this in a tone that made Berkely's heart jump, and old Terrence Blake spoke for the first time.

"What age was Larry when he left for New York, Peggy?" he asked.

"Larry was six-and-twenty on his last birthday," said Mrs. Morrison, wiping her eyes.

"Is it truth you're telling me! Well, by all that's wonderful, I would have thought the boy was in petticoats by the hillibullo you're raising. Here's Nelly, not twenty yet, has had her mind on a lad this year past, and Katie's just waiting to take her pick of the best. But Larry, the slip of a boy, musn't look at a girl till he's been home and made his manners to you all, and said may I? and will you please to let me? Tut—I suppose he asked the young woman herself, and thought that was plenty."

"Thank you, Uncle Terry, for Larry's sake," cried Berkely shaking hands with the old man heartily. "That's just what I meant to say. It's very hard to blame Larry unheard, and when you see Mrs. Larry you will not blame him at all. Her family is excellent, and she is a highly educated and refined lady. Larry would have written from the first, but hoped to come

home from time to time. Even now he will not fix his wedding day till he has heard from you. He hopes, with your permission, to bring his wife here on a visit, and is all impatience to receive it."

There was a little silence; then Kate said:

"He means to live in New York, then?"

"Oh, yes; Mr. Waters has bought and furnished a beautiful house for them; as I told you, Larry is going to marry an heiress, and an only child, but she is the gentlest and most unassuming one I ever saw."

"Larry's a lucky fellow," cried Bess, gaily, "and there's nothing left to be done, since breakfast is cold, and no one seems inclined to finish it, but for aunt to write a kind, assuring letter to Larry, telling him we are prepared to love his wife like good sisters and cousins."

Every one rose from the table, and after a little lingering about the dining-room, went away, Mrs. Morrison to her own room, to consider her letter, and the young ladies to review the affair privately. Uncle Terrence offered to accompany Berkely to the hotel, and see about his luggage. While the old man went to fetch his hat and cane, and Berkely stood by the window looking into the street, Bess came into the parlor and fell to work busily rearranging it. Seeing him standing there, she gave him her hand and said:

"Thank you for what you have done; talk with my cousins of Miss Waters whenever you can; I think I can manage my aunt."

With that she began to busy herself again, and it seemed to Berkely so hard to leave her working away with her dreary looking face and hopeless eyes, that he paused on the door sill and asked:

"Is it necessary, absolutely necessary, that you should do this? You are not well enough."

She interrupted him—"It is the best thing I can do, and I like it; be sure of that," she said, and smiled after him as he went away.

"One scene of her play is done," he thought. "She is a

good actress; but"—as he recalled her entreaty to keep her earlier knowledge a secret—"but she had to learn her part"

CHAPTER IV.

"UNCLE TERRY."

"Poor Bess," said Uncle Terrence to Berkely, as they walked on together, "Poor Bess, she'll have her hands full now, for our folk have a curious way of being staggered by every bit of news past doing a hand's turn."

"I can scarcely see the necessity for all the drudgery she does," said Berkely. "She is a sensible young lady, and must have her reasons for it, or I should think it a whim."

"Well, now," said the old man, "though Bess is no favorite of mine, I think she has right on her side. She's fond of show and company, and if she had a servant and a servant's waste, it's little of either she could afford. Forbye that, if she hired one girl, she would have to hire three, one apiece to wait on the young ladies. Sure it's nothing but her doing everything herself, with what help she can wring out of Jenny, that keeps them in heart to do the little they do. They were but weans when they left old Ireland, but they brought the spirit of its gentry with them. Faith! they understand taking their ease, and sure their mother's a noble example to them at that same."

"Uncle Terrence," said Berkely, who had begun to feel an indefinable curiosity in everything concerning her, "you said Miss Saunders was no favorite of yours. May I ask you why?"

"Well, you may, Berkely; but that's not saying that I'll tell you"—the old fellow laughed to himself a while, and then continued. "The truth is the truth, and it's just this, my boy. I was speaking of my niece's, Peggy Morrison's weakness. Well, it didn't begin in her branch of the family, for I have a touch of it myself. I like to take my comfort quietly as well as the rest,

and some way Bess Saunders is a constant reproach to me and keeps me reasoning with myself from morning till night. 'Terrence Blake,' says I, 'you're an old grey headed crature now, and you need ease and rest. Whenever you've gone out of your way, and made an effort to do anything, ill luck has fallen on you, and that's God's truth, so now take your pipe in your mouth and your book in your hand and leave the rest to the Lord that cares for the sparrows and the young ravens.' It's beautiful Christian doctrine ; but when I see that lassie flying from one thing to another, from day dawn till sunset, I take no peace or comfort in it."

"And that's why you like my cousin Kate best. She is all repose and dignity."

"Yes ; if there is a hair's differ between the three, I think Kate is the laziest, and I naturally take to her. But there's reason in all things, Berkely, I am a great hand for reason ; luck first, says I, and then reason—so don't misjudge me.

"I was bred a doctor, as you know, but having a little property left me, says I to myself, 'Terrence Blake, what have you against the world that you should turn to doctoring ? enjoy what you have, and leave God's creatures at peace,' says I. But, no ; my father wouldn't have me settle down in what he called an idle life, so on board a ship I went as assistant surgeon, no less. And what came of it ? There was no luck in it, and I took a fever myself, and came home without a hair on my head. Then I listened to nature, and settled myself in peace once more, but your uncle Bernard would drive me into a speculation with him, and my heart was just broke, driving from place to place buying up flax that was to be the making of us all. I never rightly understood the gain that was to come from it, but I felt the loss, for it all fell through someway, and everything I had, but the place my father left me, went with it. When your father sent for your uncle Bernard to come to America, I left too, for the house seemed empty without Peggy and the children. I sold the bit of land I held, and with the exception of a bad turn I had in railroad stocks, here I have been at my ease ever since. It's some men's luck to work, Berkely, and I always thought labor a

noble thing, but it goes against me in every way, and thank God, he has given me the natural instinct to avoid it."

"I ought to write to Larry," said Berkely, after a pause. "Do you think I may promise him a kind reception? You know my aunt better than I do; is it she or my cousins I shall have to conciliate most?"

"It's all settled," said his uncle, assuringly; "give yourself no further thought about it. Poor Peggy felt what she said, but the girls were just playing off their airs. His mother had laid Larry out for Bess, and sure I thought myself it was all settled between them. But Katie and Nelly are mighty tickled to think things are as they are. Larry's not the boy to let his wife be a slave for any one but himself. So there would be a change in the kitchen, you see, and though the dear creatures don't trouble themselves thinking or contriving for the future in a general way, this is a fact that comes home to them, both plain and easy."

"Well, well," said Berkely, "I'm heartily glad that my coming among them as Larry's ambassador, will not be fatal to the family peace, as I feared it would this morning. And now, Uncle Terry, as a man who has always been unfortunate in your own speculations, I want you to give me your advice in a business way."

"Is it too much cash you have, Berkely, that you come to me for help to lose it? Faith you couldn't have spoke to a better man. It's more than a talent, it's a genius I have at the same, judging by the way I've stripped myself of everything I ever had, except a bare penny to keep body and soul together."

"Uncle Terry, did you ever know an Irishman or an Irishman's son that didn't have faith in luck? Why should I be an exception to my name and race? And you know the old saying about no luck for yourself but luck to give away. So you may as well bestow yours on me as another. I am going to buy property, and lead the lazy life of a landlord."

"And have you given up your business entirely?"

"Entirely," returned Berkely. "When in settling my affairs, which was what detained me in New York, I closed my last

ledger, I swore never to open one on my own account again as long as I lived"

"And what puts buying property into your head?" asked his uncle.

"I don't know exactly. I have some money, as you may naturally suppose, after all these years of devotion to business. must do something with it, and that seems as good an investment in a quiet way as any other."

"May be you're right. It's not a thing I would do myself, if I was rolling in gold, for I would have to rent it, you see, and the poor unfortunate creature who lodged in it, would be burned in his bed and sacrificed entirely to my own black luck," said Uncle Terry, shaking his head dubiously.

"Still you'll give me the benefit of your advice, promise me that," said Berkely, as they entered the hotel together.

"Oh, yes," said Uncle Terry, "for he'd be a fool, man, that couldn't guide another better than he can go himself."

Berkely was kept so busy all the morning attending to the transfer of his trunks, and the unpacking of some cases of Chinese goods that he had brought as gifts to his aunt and cousins, that fearing he had missed the dinner hour, he prevailed on Uncle Terry to remain and dine with him at the hotel. Going home late in the afternoon, he found no one in the parlors or hall, and went to Larry's former apartment, which he found a labyrinth of trunks and boxes. He had thrown off his coat preparatory to commencing their proper arrangement, when some one tapped at his door. It was his aunt, with a little of the morning's trouble still left about her eyes, and an unfolded letter in her hand.

"Why didn't you come home to your dinner, Berkely?" she asked. "Sure we waited for you till the things weren't worth the eating. You've got your hands full, I see"—she looked round on the baggage—"and I'll not be stopping now to hinder you."

She moved towards the door, but Berkely stayed her.

"Don't go, aunt, pray don't go," he said. "I'd rather talk to you than do anything else, and as this is my own room, you know, these things can wait my convenience."

"Well," she answered, seating herself on the end of a trunk, and still holding the letter in her hand, "you see Bess has been talking to me, and she has proved to me that my duty as Larry's mother, and my own selfish views, are two different things. I can't explain it to you rightly now, but she has incensed me into it entirely. My wanting to bring him and her together, was just the worst thing ever I thought of, and she gives me to understand that it was only the Lord's mercy kept him from falling into the trap I laid for him, which would be the ruin of us all."

Mrs. Morrison sighed and shook her head. "God forgive me," she said. "I suppose it's my perverse nature, but when I'm out of her sight, I can't see it that way at all at all."

"And so you have written to Larry," said Berkely, recalling her to what he knew she wished to say to him. "Of course you will send some kind message to Miss Waters."

"To tell you the truth, Berkely, it was that I came to speak about," replied his aunt. "You see, Bess was with me when I wrote this, and it's small comfort I had; crossing out every second line, for fear I should let slip a word that spoke my mind to Larry—the deceiving limb—but when I came to make my respects to the young lady, off she went to the kitchen, and leaves me to finish it myself. If she had left me with Larry to settle, it's little trouble it would be to me," said Mrs. Morrison, her resignation fast disappearing. "Oh that I should ever rear a child to go again my heart's wishes, as this black rogue has done," she added, entirely breaking down.

"Miss Waters is a very gentle, affectionate girl," said Berkely, who in desperation had hit upon the plan of appearing unconscious of the change in his aunt, "and will be a loving daughter to you, I am sure. She is shy and sensitive, and I would suggest that Kate and Nelly should write too. Remember she is coming among strangers, and needs consideration."

"Is it strangers, Berkely," cried his aunt, irascibly; "and what is she but a stranger herself, and a stranger she would remain, if I had the ordering of things."

A knock at his door at this moment was an infinite relief to Berkely, who, never having had any family experiences, was at

a disadvantage with his aunt. When he opened it, he found Miss Saunders waiting to be let in with her arms and hands so full that she must certainly have indicated her presence by butting the door with her head.

"Let me help you!" he said, trying to relieve her of part of the things she carried, but she laughingly begged him to clear a table for service, as she had arranged her load artistically, and if he took away one thing, the rest would inevitably fall. First, she laid down a pair of large, old-fashioned silver candlesticks, carved and highly polished—a pretty China match-safe, a tray for glasses, and a water pitcher, and some clean towels were among the rest.

"The lazy man's burden, Bess," said Mrs. Morrison, smiling pleasantly, her former annoyance entirely gone.

"You know I'm not lazy, aunt, and I'll appeal to Mr. Morrison to prove it. See this little room that Larry used to stow full of books and papers. Jenny and I have put it in excellent order for a dressing-room, or, as you must have gathered some odd things in your travels, why not make it a museum?"

"That's a capital idea," exclaimed Berkely. "It has a door opening into the hall, and we'll make it a household affair, and you'll all assist me to unpack—won't you?"

"Yes," said Bess, eagerly, "that I will—let us do it this evening, after tea."

"Bess," said her aunt, "if it's employment you're looking after, here is this letter to Larry, that ought to be in the office now, and if you would think of a suitable word or two in regard to the young lady, I would close it immediately."

"No one can do that but yourself, aunt; and pray do it at once. Come, I'll go to your room with you, and fold and direct it, so that Uncle Terry can take it before tea." So saying, Bess put the things she had brought in their places, and hurried her aunt away to finish the letter.

"She tried to spare herself the pain of greeting Larry's bride," thought Berkely. "I wish I could have helped her. There is a hard path before her, and she looks to constant labor or excitement to carry her through."

Being alone, he fell to work industriously, and before tea was ready, he had wrought himself into quite a glow of pride and pleasure in his new quarters. He had unpacked everything except the case of presents, and seated on that, he looked around him with great satisfaction. Larry's books he had put into one of his empty boxes, and his own filled their place ; he had hung his pictures on the walls, placed a pretty lacquered looking affair that was half secretary, half writing table, in one corner, and a great bamboo reading chair, that could be extended into a couch, at its side. His mantel-piece was embellished with innumerable curiously-shaped vases, and two immense octagonal jars stood one each side the hearth.

"Have you been rubbing a wonderful lamp, Berkely ?" asked Uncle Terry, as he stood in the door-way.

"Yes, I knocked," he answered, in reply to Berkely's look of surprise, "but you were lost in the contemplation of your possessions, and didn't hear me."

"The pride of proprietorship," said Berkely, laughing ; "you will excuse it, I hope. Do you know, Uncle Terry, that I am in such a rapturous state about finding a home at last, that I'm afraid I'll make a fool of myself in some ridiculous way before my aunt and cousins. So I sit here trying to get used to it."

"Talking of ridiculous things," said Uncle Terry. "You mind what you were saying about buying property, this morning ? Well, I heard by chance of a bit that's to be sold. It belongs to a doctor here ; he's one of the first in the place, and it's in a part of the town that's improving, so you may as well venture on that as anything else."

"Thank you for thinking of it ; he's to be seen at his office, I suppose. Oh, that's his card. Well, I'll call on him to-morrow. And now, uncle, if the ladies are at leisure, I'll open this box there are some shawls and work-boxes in it that I want their opinions about."

"Well, that I may never sin," cried the old man, laughing ; "if it's presents you mean, it's a lucky time they've come in ; since there's nothing soothes the ruffled feelings of this family like a little attention in that way. I'll say this for them, it's not

the worth of what they get, for they'll go into the same tantrum over a bit of ribbon as they will over a silk gown. Many's the time I've saved myself from a storm that was hanging over me, for walking into the parlor before company with a pipe in my mouth, or some such heathenish act, by taking a new book or a lace handkerchief out of my pocket just as they were ready to fly at me."

"I'm glad of it," said Berkely; "gifts are meant to give pleasure, and it is a delightful quality in any one to be pleased with them. I hope something I can do will counterbalance the annoyance I gave them this morning."

"It's that I mean, Berkely; their feelings are so big, you see, that they have no room for more than one at a time; so this morning's wrath against Larry and his wife will be quenched entirely in their delight with the Chinese goods. Sure, when they see the bottom of that box, they'll be ready to embrace them both."

"My aunt, too—will she be so easily propitiated?"

"Faith will she; and why not?"

"And Miss Saunders?"

"Is it Bess? Well, no," said Uncle Terry, slowly; "the Irish is not so strong in her. There's just Scotch enough about her to keep you uneasy. I don't know, mind you," he added, "but I wouldn't wonder a bit, if in spite of her earnestness in Larry's favor this morning, her heart was worse set against what he's doing than any one of them."

Jenny Brackett at this moment began to perform an energetic peal on the tea bell directly at Berkely's door; and Uncle Terry, between whom and this young handmaiden there existed a feud, broke off to lay violent hands upon her.

"Stop, Jenny, you ill-starred imp," he cried. "Leave off clashing and clanging, and put the power of your elbow into scouring the pots in the kitchen."

"Miss Bess told me to take the bell, and to go and to ring till you heard me; and I'm a going to go and tell her that you're blaming me for doing what I was told to do."

"Do you mind that, now; she's going to tell Bess. Oh,

she's a born villain, and it's part of her deviltry to let on she thinks me deafer than I am, and divert herself roaring at me, or thundering away at the bell as she did just now. But come away down to supper, Berkely; the poor lass is none too well; she's been hard at it all day, and we won't keep her waiting."

CHAPTER V.

BERKELY'S ROOM.

"Oh, yes; we shall be all alone this evening; let us spend it in Cousin Berkely's room; there's a fire there, Bess, isn't there? And Uncle Terry'll make some negus, and we'll have some of Bess's gingernuts. Why, it will be a kind of house warming for Berkely. What a capital idea, isn't it?"

So cried Nelly, clapping her hands in answer to Berkely's entreaty that they would all step into his apartment and give them his opinion of its new aspect.

"Thank you, Nelly, for proposing it—that will be delightful," said he. "And I shan't compound for a moment less than the whole evening, so we'll give Miss Saunders a quarter of an hour's grace, and all go up together."

They had been having a laughing controversy on the subject of ringlets, wherein Uncle Terry had threatened to unfold Nelly's secret for getting up hers. Kate, secure in her own glossy bands, had urged this disclosure, while Nelly had defended it by holding her hand over Uncle Terry's mouth, and much spluttering and scuffling ensued. Berkely, laughing at his merry cousin, leant back in his chair, his eyes meanwhile observing Bess. She had talked gaily until Nelly and her uncle absorbed the attention, when she rested her arms on the table and let her head fall into her hands; he could not see her face, but she clasped her head tightly as if in great pain, and seemed to forget herself until it was proposed to pass the evening above

stairs, when she sprang up and began hurriedly to clear away the tea things.

"Show me the broom, if you please, Jenny, and I'll see and brush out this floor, while you're helping away with the dishes," said uncle Terry. "Katie dear, sit down in the easy chair while you're waiting. Bess looks pale and faint, so a little exercise over the kitchen stove 'll be the making of her."

"You're talking mighty strange, uncle Terry," said Mrs. Morrison; "Bess has had enough of the stove with baking and cleaning to-day, and it's her you should be persuading to sit down, and not Katie, who has practiced the same till it comes natural and easy to her."

"See that, now, Peggy," laughed the old man, "no one but yourself would have thought of the like."

"Now, Uncle Terry, don't be satirical," said Nelly, trying to pull the broom away from him. "Mother, he wants to put Katie and me to the blush because we're lazy."

"I've been in many a fool scheme in my time, but none as wild as that, Nelly dear," said Uncle Terry; and with an injured air his niece dropped the contested broom and began to pout.

"You say everything disagreeable you can think of, I do believe, Uncle Terry. What will cousin Berkely think of us?" said she pettishly.

"Sure, he'll never mind an old man's tongue while he has his own good eyes to guide him. So never fear."

Katie smiled at this pleasantry, but took no further notice of the contest, which grew warmer every moment. She was talking to Berkely of the changes he had seen in the city; how new streets had sprung up and old ones disappeared; how he had looked in vain that morning for buildings that he remembered, finding them replaced by more imposing structures. She was an easy, graceful talker, and excelled particularly in commonplaces, having a sustained sweetness of manner that higher flights of thought might ruffle.

Bess had taken the fallen broom and put the room to rights, while her cousin was still busy trying to convince her mother and uncle of her natural industry.

"Now I declare, Bess," she cried, when she observed this, "that's too bad, why didn't you wait a moment, I meant to do it myself, you know I did."

"Sure she knows you meant it, and took your meaning, which is what I do myself when I want you to do a turn for me."

"Cousin Berkely," cried Nelly, as the old man said this, "please don't let Uncle Terry come into your room to-night; I'll make the negus myself."

"I'm going up this minute to light the candles," replied Uncle Terry. "I'm going to assist Berkely in doing the honors, and if you don't make friends with me now, it's yourself will find the door shut on you."

After extending his hand in a stately manner once or twice, and being as often refused, he at last succeeded in coaxing Nelly into a laugh, when they went up stairs together, followed by Mrs. Morrison, Katie, and Berkely.

"Where is Bess?" asked Mrs. Morrison. "She has been up here lighting the candles, I see."

"Of course she has," said Uncle Terry; "Nelly and I had a little squabble on purpose to give her a chance. Never heed her, Peggy, she'll be up here this minute, but look at Berkely's easy chair; see here, you can lengthen it out and make a bed of it, no less."

"Well, if ever I saw the like!" cried Mrs. Morrison, admiringly, "it's wonderful; and look at the wood it's made of—like sally rods winding through each other."

"Oh, Katie, do look at these curious vases; and see these queer fans. Bless me! see the lanterns, and these fire screens. Why, it isn't Larry's old room at all, is it? Even the carpet has a Chinese look about it."

"Cousin Berkely, it's quite delightful to see all these odd things," said the calmer Katie, but Nelly interrupted her by crying out—

"If he hasn't got another box full there! do see. It's the Arabian Nights, I declare it is; and here comes Bess, looking as grand as the tragic Muse."

"Well, Nelly, if you have any wit, you don't trouble folk

showing it to them," said her mother. "I was looking for you, Bess," she continued. "Hasn't Berkely made an entire wonder of his room?"

"Why, it's charming," said Bess, laughing.

She had a black silk dress, and a rich lace jacket of the same color, over it, with loose flowing sleeves. Her face had the deadly white hue it had worn all day, and she certainly looked tragic enough as Nelly saw her in the doorway. Her voice and manner, however, were all comedy; she ran from one thing to another full of surprise and admiration; and when, at last, the united efforts of Berkely and Uncle Terry removed the cover of the unexplored box, she and Nelly dropped, Turk-fashion, on the carpet beside it, with open-eyed anticipation of its wonders.

"All that is here," said Berkely, pausing in a bashful confused sort of way, "I brought with me as gifts to you, my dear aunt and cousins." He bowed towards Miss Saunders as if begging permission to include her. "If you will only take them with a little of the feelings with which I give them, you will make me very proud and happy indeed." Saying this, he began vigorously to rip up the packing cloth from the top, and Mrs. Morrison considered it a good opportunity to wipe the tears out of her eyes.

"Berkely dear," she exclaimed, "it goes to my heart to think of you remembering us, and you far enough away among heathens, and if it is the value of a pin, or gold itself, it's alike welcome after that."

"It's truth you're saying, Peggy," murmured Uncle Terry in a low tone; "it's truth, and I bear witness to it."

"Oh, what is that?" cried Katie, really excited. "A shawl! a magnificent crape shawl!"

"Beautiful," "exquisite," etc., etc., echoed on all sides.

"There are three of them white, and here is a scarlet one for Miss Saunders. You like the color, do you not?" Berkely asked.

A bright flush of pleasure lit up her face; she sprang up and threw it around her shoulders.

"I do, indeed! it's glorious!" she cried. "Put yours on,

Nelly, till I see it. It's elegant, perfectly elegant, but mine is splendid."

"Who ever thought to see Bess daft about something to wear," exclaimed Uncle Terry, holding up his hands in mock amazement.

"Whoever saw me have anything so grand to go daft about, before," she answered, as Nelly and she passed each other in a parade up and down the chamber for the full display of their acquisitions.

Katie stood before the glass arrayed in hers, in speechless admiration at her own reflection, while her mother sat weighing hers in her hands, and feeling the embroidery between her finger and thumb, utterly at a loss for adjectives.

"Here are some fans," said Berkely; "and there are satin aprons; the colors of the embroidery are startling—they are more curious than elegant."

"One at a time, cousin," screamed Nelly; "I haven't oh'd half enough over the fans before you bring on the aprons. Did any one ever see such carving as there is on this ivory? White fans and white shawls, why, we're all as bride-like as possible, except Bess, who is holding hers like a dagger, and looks like Lady Macbeth in an opera cloak."

"There's nothing tragic in an apron," said Bess, "so I'll put on mine. What is this embroidered on it, a cockatoo or a bird of paradise? It's gorgeous—absolutely gorgeous! one in each corner, only think, Nell; yours has only a bunch of red and yellow roses."

Nelly made a critical comparison with her cousin, and then begged an exchange, which Bess declined.

"It's the birds," she explained; "I always wanted to see a bird of paradise, and now I have two of my own. They're beautiful, superb, elegant; go away, Nell, I wouldn't consider your proposal for a moment."

"Cousin Berkely, didn't you mean it for me?" cried Nelly "Bess, you are a mean thing; you saw the bird's tail and yo grabbed it."

"Really," said Katie, "one can scarcely tell which to admire most, your slang, Nelly, or Bess's hyperbole."

"Why, Katie, I haven't begun yet; I think their wings and tails bewilderingly bewitching, and I consider their plumage at once gorgeously graceful and exquisitely elegant."

"Leave off fashing, Bess, and see this," cried her aunt. "It's a work-box—a complete work-box; Berkely tells me the folk in China made it, and he has just taken the breath from me with surprise; sure, I thought them the wildest barbarians, with, saving your presence, scarcely wit enough to keep themselves decently covered."

"Oh, they are very ingenious, I assure you," said Berkely; "and they wear clothes too," he added, laughing. "Here are some of their silks; not very elegant, you see, in color or texture; simply valuable as specimens of their manufacture."

"Why, I think they are very pretty," said Katie, examining them. "This is a very nice piece of scarlet; the yellow is not so good a shade."

"But they'll do grandly for tableaux, won't they, Bess?" exclaimed Nelly.

"To be sure they will, and we'll get up some when Larry brings his wife home. They'll be here in a week or two, about Christmas time, I suppose, and it will be quite appropriate. Don't you think so, Bess?"

"Certainly," said Bess, taking her work-box to the light to examine it.

Uncle Terry touched Berkely and smiled. "It's all right, you see," he whispered.

"Here are some quaint little vases, that Nelly will like, I know, she has quite a taste that way; and here is a package for you, aunt, which empties the box," said Berkely, giving it into Uncle Terry's hands to open.

Nelly sprang up from the carpet, where she had been arranging her gifts as if about to open a bazaar.

"Cousin," she cried. "The vases are not distributed yet, let me have my choice Shan't I? Let me see—there are six; a pair for each of us. Mother has that great parcel uncle is undoing, and ought to be content."

"I like this pair best," said Katie, selecting two.

"Put them back, Kate—put them back. You shan't come any such game. Bess did me out of my apron with the cockatoo on it; but, you see, I've learnt wisdom."

"Nelly," said Katie, laying down the articles in question with a look of disgust, "you shock me. I wouldn't be unlady-like enough to use such terms for the world."

Nelly laughed with all her might. "Excuse me, Cousin Berkely," she said; "Katie would not be unlady-like, but she would have taken the prettiest pair of vases if I hadn't frightened her, and made her lay them down."

"Well, that I may never sin, but that's a beautiful sight. Will you just look at it, Bess? I never saw the equal of it since I was born into the world!"

So cried Mrs. Morrison over the contents of the case Uncle Terry had unfastened for her. It displayed a miniature set of transparent china, curiously shaped and beautifully painted in strange devices; it was packed in a box made with apertures to contain the different articles, and was altogether a very rare and pretty affair. It formed the culminating point in the family admiration; they gathered together over it, and went into raptures. Every piece was separately examined, Mrs. Morrison watching breathlessly all the while lest it were broken. The shape, the painting, and particularly the ease with which you could see the light through it, were all commented on, and Uncle Terry and Berkely had cleared away the box and packings of different kinds, long before the theme was exhausted.

"What are you going to do with the table, Berkely?" asked Nelly, as he wheeled it into the middle of the room.

"I'm preparing to entertain my guests, of course," he returned; "but I shall need some assistance. Will you help me?"

"To be sure I will, if it's anything I can do."

"Well, first tell me what to put these things into," he said, producing from the little inner room two blue china jars, filled with sweetmeats.

"Bless me!" cried Nelly, "Chinese preserves! Something to put them in? Certainly, it's the easiest thing in the world. Bess, come here a moment, please, and tell me what dish to get."

Bess held up her hands in admiration.

"What a treat we shall have," she cried. "Look, aunt and Katie; preserves, dates, candied fruits, uncle's negus and my gingernuts."

"It will be delightful; only the table's too small. Is there no other?" asked Katie.

"This is a card-table," said Bess, "and you can open the leaves in this way. Turn it round, please, Mr. Morrison."

As he did so, and was about to unfold it, Nelly exclaimed:

"Stop a moment, please; I want to see."

She had spied something in a corner of the drawer the table formed.

"Yes, it is," she cried; "a gold miniature in a leather case; it's wedged tight. Pull it out, Katie; it must be Larry's; he used to keep papers here. How romantic!—an adventure, really."

Bess was standing before Berkely, showing him how to unfold the table. He looked at her for an instant, and then snatched the picture from Katie's hand.

"Forgive me," he said; "but I really cannot let you see it. A woman's miniature has something sacred about it, and can only be meant for one eye to look on." He was excited, and his face flushed as he spoke.

"But, Cousin Berkely," said Nelly, "why should you warm up so about Larry's affairs? He is my brother, and I don't see any reason why, as his sister, I should not demand to see it—as I do now," she added wilfully, holding out her hand for it.

If Berkely's face was flushed before, it became scarlet now.

"The picture is not Larry's," he said; "it is mine. It represents a lady whom I honor with all my heart. I was very careless in leaving it there, and you will excuse me now when I put it in a safer place."

With that he thrust it in his bosom, and seizing the table-cloth, which Mrs. Morrison held, spread it in a triangular way, and began to set the things upon it vehemently.

Nelly stood surprised a moment, and then burst out laughing.

"We've had a scene—positively a scene!" she cried. "For-

give me, Cousin Berkely ; and Bess, do look how he's dashing the plates on the crooked cloth."

Bess came to the rescue, and joined her cousin in laughing, while Mrs Morrison and Katie regarded them both with amazed gravity.

"Well, lassies," said she at last, "you must know more nor Katie or I, if you see any joke. Sure I thought it was war between Berkely and you to the knife, over that bit of a leather bag, and Bess thought the same, I'm sure, for all she's laughing now. She looked as if her heart was in her mouth."

"Here's Uncle Terry with the negus ; shall I place the chairs, Cousin Berkely," asked Katie.

"Faith, Katie," said Uncle Terry, nodding approvingly as he placed the bowl on the table, "it's a safe offer ; Berkely has them set round while you're speaking, and here's a nice easy one fornint me for you, darling."

"What a delightful family party," cried Berkely, rubbing his hands in satisfaction. "How charming to set at a round table, with neither head nor foot."

"Berkely," said his aunt, laying her hand on his, "it's but the second night you've been under the roof with us, still you're that near to our hearts, that we feel as if you'd been born and bred here. Show me a cup of the negus, Uncle Terry. It's many a day since I gave a toast, but I'll give you one the night, and you'll all join me, I know."

Uncle Terry filled the glasses and rose ; all followed his example. Mrs. Morrison touched her glass to Berkely's.

"Here's to the good son of a good father," she said. "May the home he has come to, and that proud to claim him, always return him the happiness he brought to it—and I pray that as he has filled an empty place in our hearts, he may never find one in his own."

Emptying her glass, Mrs. Morrison laid it down, and taking Berkely's hand, drew him towards her, and kissed him fervently. Berkely, his face all aglow, and his eyes full of earnest feeling, began to speak, but said nothing ; he looked round a moment, then dropped into his seat and burst into tears.

"I knew I should do it," he said, in a minute or two, "I knew I should do it; I won't ask you to forgive me, for after all you will understand it, perhaps, as well as anything I could say."

The evening wore on cheerfully; there were no more tears, but much laughter and many kind speeches. After tasting the candied fruits and preserves, and sipping a little negus, the young ladies discovered an irresistible inclination to recur to the shawls; and a turn of the conversation, taking Uncle Terry to the "town of Derry," where he was born; he dragged Berkely within the walled enclosure of that city, and held him prisoner, there guarded by Mrs. Morrison, as sentinel, who, at the faintest hope of release, came in with "You mind the fair on Midsummer day, uncle?" or, "Tell Berkely about Shamus O'Riley;" or, "Tim Dougherty's mare," etc., and made his bonds doubly secure.

Under cover of this, Nelly and Katie took their shawls from the boxes, examined, compared them, and viewed them in different lights; but Bess sat listening, or seeming to listen, her eyes fixed on the speakers and her chin resting in her hands, till it grew so late that even Mrs. Morrison was tired talking, and said—

"We must bid your cousin good night, children, or we'll never be invited in again. Uncle Terry, there will be no rising you in the morning, if you don't go away up to your bed now."

Nelly had packed her things ready for transfer, and recommended her plan.

"Just set your work-box on your shawl-box, girls," she said, "and then you can pile up the rest in pyramid style."

"No, no," cried Berkely, springing forward, "pray let me carry these things down for you."

"No," said Nelly, with affected seriousness, "I'd rather not trust such an irascible person with such precious things. If that miniature had not been in a leather case, I'm sure you would have broken it, dragging it away from me as you did."

She laughed merrily and shook her curls at him, to remind him of the warmth he had shown; but hastened to add:

"I'm in fun, Cousin Berkely; our room is just next to yours

here—it's but a step—and you'd better help Bess, who goes down to the next landing."

But Bess was busy gathering up the plates and glasses on a tray and wisking the crumbs off the carpet into a dust-pan.

"O Bess dear, don't fash yourself; the bit of dirt we've made will never break Berkely's rest, and the whole morrow's before ye."

Mrs. Morrison urged this view of the case on her niece more as a customary demur against her briskness than as a speech with hopeful results, for, bidding Berkely good night, she retired, shaking her head and murmuring:

"She's that set agin leaving things through other, that I believe in my heart she'll rise up in her coffin and clear up afther her wake."

"Please, leave your door open a few moments more, Mr. Morrison," said Bess, as her cousins disappeared with their gifts, and her aunt followed, Uncle Terry bearing her trophies below stairs.

"Miss Saunders," protested Berkely, "I really will not see you take that tray down stairs. We won't waste words about it, for I'll take it, willy nilly."

Without more ado he possessed himself of her burden, and she was fain to content herself with the light.

"Just put it on the dining-table. I'll be stirring early and arrange it before breakfast," she said, leaning over the baluster, with the light held so that it would shine in the dining-room door.

"And now," said Berkely, as he ascended the stairs, "I'll bring your parcels down. You're tired and need rest; don't come up, please."

She was weary-looking certainly, but rest did not seem so attractive to her as Berkely supposed, for, coming down laden, he found her pacing the little hall as if its quiet was distasteful to her. Her face was white and haggard, and she turned her sad eyes upon him drearily.

"You are very kind to me, Mr. Morrison," she said, with an effort to regain her old smile, "very, very kind to me."

She opened the door, and standing in the threshold, took the parcels one by one from him. The last was placed on the dressing-table, and he had turned to go, but paused and held out his hand to say good night.

Bess gave him hers, and something slipped into it; something that she stood holding, as he had left her, cold and motionless, long after the echo of his departing footsteps had died away.

In the grate a bright fire glowed and burned cheerily. She roused herself and went towards it at last, and as the blaze shot up clear and distinct it reflected a strange, resentful light in her eyes. With the poker she broke the burning logs into a bed of coals and threw upon them the trinket Berkely gave her. In a moment the leather cover shrivelled into tinder, and a tiny bright face, fair and happy, looked up and mocked her with a smile. She could not bear its glance, so she gathered the fire about it and beat it down among the embers with remorseless bitterness, as if she longed to destroy every memory that bound her to the deceitful dream from which she had awakened.

CHAPTER VI.

DOCTOR WINDELL.

"DR. WINDELL, No. 30, East Grove St.," read Berkely, consulting the card Uncle Terry had given him.

"East Grove Street, doesn't that branch off here on the other side of the Park?" he asked of the old gentleman with whom he had been strolling here and there for the past hour or two.

"Yes; and as your road's straight before ye, I'll just say good morning and be off about a little business of my own."

"Business, Uncle Terry!" echoed Berkely. "Why, I thought you regarded the very word with aversion."

Uncle Terry gave Berkely one of his whimsical smiles.

"It's not what a commercial person like yourself would call a

strictly business matter I'm going to attend to ; but, you see, I'm fond of a good story, the longer the better, if it's full of mysterious trouble. I take it with my pipe in the afternoon, and I come back to myself and the quiet peace of Burleigh Place, from some ould bandit's cave or subterranean dungeon at the sound of Jenny's tea-bell. Faith, if there's harm in such divarsion, I'm sorry for it, since it's mate and drink to me."

"Then it's to look for a book you're going now, uncle," said Berkely. "Why not see if I have nothing in that way to suit you? They're not arranged yet, I know, but they're unpacked and put on the shelves in a sort of way."

"You're both kind and obliging, and I'm beholden to you, Berkely ; but you must know that I have what our young ladies are pleased to call a barbarous taste ; so it's little hope I'd have of finding my books on your shelves. No ; I have an acquaintance below here that has a wonderful collection, and when he meets with one that looks as if the young crayture it's written about just fairly got off with the skin of her teeth from a heartless father, or pirates and robbers, he just lays it by till I happen in. If you'll make your way up to my bower some day, ye may read the names of some of my favorites, as beyond the names you'll never go, for sure ye're young enough to have a story in your own life, and not be driven like me to seek for one in an old tattered yellow leaved book."

Berkely laughed, and the old man hurried briskly away, lest his friend of the book-stall might be tempted to dispose of some legendary treasure in his absence.

East Grove Street was a sort of crescent, bounding a small park in the northern part of the city ; the centre house in the row was larger and of more pretentious appearance than the rest, and had a wide hall with windows on either side. Those at he right of the entrance were furnished with office blinds and adorned with a small narrow sign bearing Dr. Windell's name, and the word "office" immediately below it.

In answer to Berkely's ring, a man-servant opened the door and ushered him into a front parlor, half office, half library, and connected by folding-doors with another room of similar appearance.

The doors were partially closed now, and a hum of question and answer gave him to understand that some one within was making a professional visit, so taking up a journal from the centre-table, he resigned himself to await the doctor's leisure. His step upon the floor and the closing of the door evidently intimated to the persons inside that a stranger was within hearing, for immediately their voices sank almost to a whisper, and in a moment or two the physician arose.

"You'll try this," he said aloud, apparently referring to a prescription he held, "and if you find no improvement in a few days, let me see you again, please."

The answer was inaudible, and he continued:

"These are difficult cases, and one can only experiment with them. They assume all sorts of symptoms, and there is no other way of arriving at the cause."

Berkely laid aside the paper he had been glancing at, and stepped forward to meet the doctor; being near the door, he heard the voice of the departing patient as it closed. It was a woman's voice, and one he knew well.

"I am very grateful for the time and attention you have given me," was all she said, and then her step was heard in the hall, and Dr. Windell stood before Berkely, bowing slightly, and glancing up from under his heavy brows with a keen, bright pair of eyes that were at once frank and penetrating, rubbed his hands, and waited.

"You have some property that you are willing to sell, doctor, I understand," said Berkely; "at least I have been told so," he added, as he observed the perfectly immovable countenance of the doctor, that admitted nothing.

Dr. Windell was a large, dark complexioned man, of about forty, with a rather heavy figure, and a face that would have been eminently handsome, if it were not so mobile that it changed with his voice or remained for the moment completely expressionless, as the fancy seized him. After an instant's survey of Berkely, he smiled courteously, and motioned him to sit.

"Why, yes," he admitted; "I have the houses, and I did think of selling them, but you see they are in a neighborhood

improving daily, while they have rather gone down, owing to rough tenants. Something must be done for them, and I'm half inclined to sell, half to rebuild; so this must explain my not being able to speak definitely about them."

Some one tapped at the door of the inner office, and the voice that Berkely had before recognized, said:

"Dr. Windell, you have not given me the proper paper; this is not a prescription, but a blank slip that you took up in mistake."

It was Miss Saunders's voice, and Berkely, stepping to the window, urged by an uncontrollable impulse to see her, was further assured that it was Bess beyond mistake, for her face was turned for a moment towards the physician, who had accompanied her to the door, and then she bowed and hastened down the steps. The doctor came back with a shrewd business face that made him an altered person, and plunged at once into the question of the property, with a very decided sense of its present and future value, and every apparent intention of selling it at a good price. Berkely Morrison had not been in training for fifteen years without having gained the knowledge of how to buy and sell, so, as he had looked at the property and formed his own idea of its worth, he met the doctor without the least disadvantage, and argued realities and possibilities towards an agreement.

'Do you know, Mr. Morrison," said Dr. Windell, "that I give this property up to you with pleasure, since I know your design concerning it?" He said this about a half hour after their conference began, seated before an escritoire, with a bundle of open papers before him. Berkely had in a few words given him an idea of his former life and present prospects; and as foremost among them was his desire to convert the tumble-down tenements into cheap and comfortable homes for laboring people the doctor, who, despite his acuteness at bargaining, was a philanthropist, had abated something of his estimate in consequence.

He looked up at Berkely and said, frankly: "I am glad you came to me to-day. I am going to New York in a few hours, partly on business, partly on professional interests, and we might

never have met. This Myers Lane property, it has always been a pet idea of mine to improve as you mean to do. I shall feel as if I had been doing it myself."

"I feared from what you said when I came in, that you would rather not sell at all."

"Ah, yes, to be sure; well, it may have been the interest I felt in a young patient who was just consulting me, that made it difficult to come at once to business." He wheeled round in the office chair he sat on, and presented a deed to Berkely, who, feeling that his interest in the patient thus casually alluded to might mark his face, hastily placed it between him and the doctor, as he looked it over.

"The person you speak of was not dangerously ill, I hope, or it would scarcely have been possible to have consulted you here," he ventured to say.

The doctor was looking over a file of notes for one referring to the matter of Myers Lane, and answered a little absently:

"Oh, no, there is never any bodily danger in diseased nerves; this young lady has received a sudden shock from the death of some friend, as far as I can gather. It's a curious case, but it will yield to time—it will yield to time."

"You prescribe for mental pain, then," said Berkely. "I see you gave her an order for medicine."

Dr. Windell smiled as he put away the useless papers.

"There's not much in that," he said; "it does no harm, and it's something to think about and look upon with hope, which is a great deal for one who feels as she does. There are all the titles and papers, Mr. Morrison; you can examine them at your leisure. I'll be back again in two or three days, and will then attend to the transfer."

"It was too much for her, poor girl," thought Berkely, as he slowly crossed the square from the doctor's house. "Too much for her, and she thought there might be a drug or an herb that would help her to forget; poor girl, poor girl!"

CHAPTER VII.

ADDIE WEST.

In this mood he walked homewards, and stood upon the door-steps, waiting abstractedly, without having rung to announce his presence.

Nell opened the door, laughing. "It would be undervaluing your thoughts to offer a penny for them, Cousin Berkely; they must be actually gigantic."

"Why do you think so, Cousin Nell?" Berkely asked, seriously. "To tell you the truth, I was in the delightful state of the 'Jolly Young Waterman,' when he rowed along thinking of nothing at all."

"Well," said Nell, "you did look like an 'innocent,' as mother says, as you stood waiting solemnly for some one to open the door without making the least effort to let us know you were there. If I hadn't seen you from the window, you would have stood a poor chance with the coming storm."

"Then there is a storm coming up," said Berkely, as he entered the parlor.

Mrs. Morrison sat in her easy chair, near the grate, and Katie knelt before her with a silk reel in her hand. Katie's smooth brow was not as clear and sunny as usual; she was undergoing one of the great trials of her life, winding skeins of silk off her mother's unreliable hands.

It would have been difficult for Berkely to have accounted for the way in which his pretty cousin used the quantity of silk he had seen her wind already; but with a general impression of observing her twist it round the point of a crooked needle constantly, he set her down in his own mind as a manufacturer of that trashy kind of stuff called fancy work. Mrs. Morrison was the only one that Katie could enlist into her service. Nelly rebelled against holding silk at the outset, Bess was too busy, Jenny Brackett was not always presentable, and Uncle Terry

pooh-poohed at the idea. Her mother had been aggravatingly given to gestures from the first, but this day was a crowning sheaf in her list of distractions. She turned to Berkely the instant he entered, and with her pinioned hands indicated through the windows the gathering wintry storm, and otherwise gesticulated until Katie, from falling back hopelessly and regarding her with bitter reproach, broke forth into actual rebuke.

"Mother," she said, "I just want you to know the trouble you give me; I've broken this silk eleven times at separate and distinct knots, needlessly made by your jerking about. It seems to me that there's a principle involved in everything, and you deliberately outrage this."

"See that, now!" exclaimed Mrs. Morrison, wrathfully; "if you say another word, I'll throw the whole thing up to ye; indeed, I'm astonished at my patience in being fashed with it as long as I have."

Katie looked round appealingly. "Fashed," she repeated; "I will let any one be the judge, if it isn't I who have been fashed."

"Then you'll be fashed by me no more," said her mother, rising with dignity.

Berkely stepped forward.

"Please resign your office to me, aunt," he said; "I shall have so many spare hours to bore you with at home here, that you'll have to contrive me some occupation in self-defence."

Katie looked up gratefully. "Really, Berkely, you've no idea how disobliging some people are till you ask a service of them; and what I've endured in this family on this subject I cannot express to you."

But Nelly laughed immoderately, and seemed really more amused at the incident than there was any apparent reason for.

"Poor Berkely," she said, soothingly; "you have thrown aside your liberty forever. You are about to wear what the poets call viewless chains, and henceforward enter that abject and miserable slavery of skein-holding."

"Mother," said Katie, who had entirely recovered her smooth

smiling dignity, "don't be annoyed at me ; I dare say I was impatient, it is rather perplexing, you know."

Mrs. Morrison had retired to the window and was looking out into the street, where a faint fall of snow was whisked about by a strong wind, so that it rather circled through the air than fell steadily.

"I'm not bothering myself about you one way or another, Katie," she replied, "but I'm just thinking if any of you minded what Bess said about a dress-maker. You're striving to leave things to the last, as you always do, and give her a flurry when Larry and his wife's at the very door."

"Mother, how can you ?" and Katie looked reproachfully at her parent ; but Mrs. Morrison was in no awe of her daughter's eyes, and went on to say, pointedly,

"Well, now, that's all folly ; Berkely 'll not live here long till he knows that you wear out your frocks and get new ones. Sure, I sometimes think it's all you take in hand from the one year's end to the other, and whatever you're to get new may as well be got now as again, on account of the new-comer."

"Where is Miss Saunders, may I ask ?" Berkely looked up from his silk upon which he had kept his eyes warily from the first, to prevent trouble. Mrs. Morrison answered him :

"She's in a great way about some waffles we're to have for tea. I don't know if you ever had them out in your foreign place, but they're a nice light cake, and with plenty of sweet fresh butter on them, would tempt anybody to eat."

"No," said Berkely, considering gravely, "I don't think we ever had any in Canton."

"It's Bess's way," said Nelly, looking up from her worsted lamp mat that had never progressed beyond the nose of an indescribable poodle. "Why she persists in it I don't know, but she never teaches Jenny Brackett to do anything of the kind. Though if she did it would be a great deal pleasanter for us all."

"There's them that's bigger than Jenny Brackett that won't be taught," said a voice at the door. It was Uncle Terry's, and he came forward yawning and stretching himself.

"Have you been sleeping, uncle ?" asked Katie.

"No, lassie ; I've been traveling. I've been in Spain, no less."

"What's that you're saying, Uncle Terry?" asked Mrs. Morrison sharply. "It's many a long year and day since you were abroad, and I never mind hearing you mention Spain at all."

"Oh, it's just a way folk have of talking, Peggy, when they have idle fancies and indulge them. It's the sin of my life, that and laziness together."

"By what particular craft did you sail this afternoon?" asked Nell. "You must know, Berkely," she added, "that uncle always travels *viâ* some dog's-eared old novel, that exploded from every library but his own, fifty years ago."

"I had the foreway of you, Miss Nell," said Uncle Terry, snapping his fingers at her ; "I told Berkely myself, and you give him no news when you say that. What good would I take out of them stories Katie and you delight in? Sure, they're no more and no less nor your own ways and your own doings over and over again. What are your modern heroines, as you call them, but lilies of the field like yourselves, with a lover more or less, or may be a saycret grief aiting up their young lives, as they say. I never knew one of *you* to be troubled in that way ; but sure, there's no variety in them at all."

"Tea's waitin'," remarked Jenny Brackett sententiously, putting her head in the parlor door ; then withdrawing it, she began to ring her bell vigorously. With an alacrity surprising at his time of life, old Terrence Blake sprang out upon her and captured it while she was still in full force. Katie released Berkely's hands, and Nell laid down her frame.

"We must not be a minute late," said Mrs. Morrison, "for you see the hot cakes have took up Bess's whole afternoon, and if we let them get cold it would destroy her patience."

As they all crowded out into the hall in haste to reach the dining-room and prevent the loss of Bess's temper, Berkely could not help wondering whether he had been mistaken in her face and voice at Dr. Windell's. He was half inclined to think he must have fancied a resemblance, for there was neither pain or care in the bright flushed face that greeted them in the dining-room.

"The waffles are light, I'm confident, Bess," said Nelly as she took her seat.

"Wait until you have tried them, Nell," said her cousin.

"Oh, I don't need to ; your face is a cook's dial. I don't mean to say anything disagreeable ; and, now that I think of it, it's rather a compliment to imply that your countenance is so very expressive that one can even tell by it whether the victuals rise well and don't burn in cooking."

"A far fetched one, Nelly ; but these cakes are light, so you are right this time. Aunt, that's coffee you're pouring out for hot water. I should have told you before, but I made it thinking it better with the waffles."

"And so it is, sure enough. Look at Uncle Terry—his eyes sparkle at the mention of it. But what will I do with these two cups ? they're partly one thing and partly the other. Jenny, you young heart-break, why don't you bring me a slop-bowl ?"

"Take my place a moment, aunt, and I'll help you," said Bess. She poured the coffee while her aunt, relieved of care, described to Berkely the effort it had cost her to learn to eat corn-bread and the love she still felt for oat meal bannocks.

Berkely followed her attentively, but his eyes were fixed on Bess, whose apparently unaffected delight in the success of her cookery filled him with astonishment.

"She neither feels nor suffers as I have thought," he said to himself ; "it was a light fancy and she has conquered it."

Mrs. Morrison had exhausted the cake question and now turned to Bess.

"I have been telling the girls that they have little enough time to see about a dress-maker ; but it's just with this as it is with everything, they'll not stir a foot till the last minute."

"Now, mother, just to set your mind at rest, I'll positively go to that Addie West's, that worked for us last winter. Miss Parrish has gone to New York, so there's no hope of her ; and Addie suited you very well, didn't she, Katie ?"

"No, I cannot say she did ; she left us with those jackets half done, and, besides, no one but Larry knew where she lived ; it was he who took our messages, you know."

Uncle Terry leant back in his chair.

"Addie West," he repeated: "is that the name of that neat looking girl you had here after Christmas, last year?"

"It's the name of the girl who sewed for us; but what do you know about her, uncle?" asked Nell, surprised.

"Just this, that she'll not be likely to sew for you again in a hurry. Why, girls dear, there's not a one among you that's as fine as she was, when I met her a week or two ago. The grandest lady in the land couldn't be more decked out; and when she saw me, some way or another she slunk off on the other side of the way, as if she felt ashamed of her splendor."

"Is it Addie West?" said Mrs. Morrison; "well, there's little shame in the girl, and I'm set against her doing a stroke of work in this house, if she was ever so able and willing. I have my eyes, and can see bravely with them too, and I always knew what she'd come to."

"And what has she come to, Peggy, woman?" asked Uncle Terry, while the young ladies looked discreetly into their cups.

"Play acting, no less," briefly responded Mrs. Morrison, with an emphasis that showed in her opinion it was impossible to say more.

"Why, mother, how can you know about it? I'm sure you never saw her play," said Nelly in astonishment.

"True for ye, I never did. I wasn't brought to frequent such heathenish diversions; but Jenny Brackett's brother Bob told her a month ago that he was at the theayter, and who should he see come in, decked out in velvet and jewels like the queen of Sheby, but Addie West. He knew her the minute he clapt his eyes on her, for you know she was here when he used to be coming back'ard and for'ard; but he says she don't take her own name at all, at all, but some high sounding nonsense, which is the way with them all, I hear, and well it may be, when they disgrace the one they were born with."

"Did Bob say she was a good actress, Jenny?" asked Nelly, showing a reprehensible interest in the fallen dress-maker, that scandalized her virtuously indignant mother.

"Bob said he never know'd she was so splendid before," said

Jenny, gladly volunteering information. "She was all drest elegant, and made believe to be a forring queen, and stamped her foot at the lords and nobles jest like a real sovering."

"She would do that, I warrant her," said Mrs. Morrison. "Do you mind the night we were all setting here, and Larry came in to say he was going out for the evening? the door hadn't closed on him till she jumpt up and declared it was late."

Bess rose.

"Come, Jenny, and help me to get some more hot coffee. You are letting your cups get cold as you talk," she said to the family, as she carried out the pot to replenish it.

Jenny was evidently loathe to leave, and lingered till her mistress's voice sharply commanded her to come.

"Well, as I was telling you," continued Mrs. Morrison, "Addie up and on with her bonnet, and never said by your leave or may I; but Katie was going off to a great party the next night, and so she told her she must stay till the trimming was stitched, because she didn't understand the way of it herself. If it had been tearing the hair out of her head, Addie couldn't have taken it worse, and she actually staggered us all with the tragic airs she put on about her rights; and in spite of all the girls could say or do, went off to the minute."

"Mr. Morrison, please let me give you some coffee; you'll find this better, I think," said Bess, returning.

As Berkely leant forward to take his cup from her hand, he became conscious of the smell of ether for an instant; he glanced up surprised, but suddenly remembered Dr. Windell's prescription.

"It was she, sure enough," he thought; "and she went out to take some at the mention of Larry's name."

"Did you ever know anything so odd?" said Nell, whose mind evidently ran on the glimpse of histrionic glory Bob Brackett had given the family. "Here were we having Addie West sew for us for months without an idea that we were employing an aspirant for future fame, a sort of Mrs. Siddons, may-be. Dear me! it's quite wonderful, isn't it?"

"May-be, Peggy, we could get a place there for Nell," said

Uncle Terry, looking slyly out of the corner of his eye at that young lady. "She might be trained into being of use in a small way; she's a way of tossing her head and clipping her words, that might make something of her yet, who knows? If we could only get Addie for old acquaintance sake to speak a word for her," he added meditatively.

"Now, Terrence Blake," said Mrs. Morrison, with indignation kindling in her eye, "a joke's a joke, but if you would even mention to a child of mine such outrageous doings, I think I'll take leave of my senses. Why, I have heard tell that they're dressed out in gauze and spangles, and none too much of that either, and that they kick and fling liker monkeys nor Christians, and think no more of standing on their heads nor we do of being on our feet."

Appalled at the vision she had conjured up, Mrs. Morrison looked around her in terror.

"Katie," she cried, "sure Nell and you know well enough where the end of such things is. Your grandfather on your father's side was a Covenanting minister; and I had two brothers curates in the Church of England; all belonging to you come of a good stock, and sooner than you should live to disgrace them I'd see you carried to your graves with dry eyes."

Nell jumped up from her seat at Berkely's side, and ran round to her mother.

"Why, mother dear," she said, hugging her energetically, "do you think because Uncle Terry makes himself silly, that I'm going to turn out a vagabond? It's all your own fault too, you would begin worrying about a dress-maker, and that set us to talking of Addie West."

Having pulled her mother's cap off, and nearly choked her as an evidence of her rectitude, Nelly went back to her seat, and Bess quietly repaired the damage. She had not spoken at all during the talk of Addie West's apostacy. Now she asked:

"Do you like my cakes, Mr. Morrison? Aunt said you would not, because she had to learn to eat them with dusted sugar and cinnamon."

"You take a pride in these things, do you not?" he asked her by way of answer.

"I suppose I do," she replied simply. "I think, perhaps, it is my nature to overdo anything I attempt."

She was smoothing her aunt's hair as she spoke, and finding the bows loose on the side of her cap, she added:

"Remind me to fix this to-night when I get through with clearing the table, won't you, aunt?"

"Do it now, and I'll help Jenny, Bess;" and, to prove her words, Nell, with strong determination marked in her countenance, rose up and began bustling about.

"I'll not leave this till I see Nell at work," said Uncle Terry, taking Katie's sewing chair by the window; "I'm looking for nothing less than a convulsion of nature to mark the event."

"Mother, speak to Uncle Terry about teasing me; I think it's shameful," cried Nelly from the kitchen.

"Oh, uncle, let the lass alone, when she's doing no harm," said her mother, smiling as she reproved the old man. "Bess, what do you say to our all sitting in here? it's cosier than the big parlors, and on stormy nights folk feel more comfortable in small rooms."

"Yes, indeed," said Bess heartily; "but, Nell, do sit down; why should you bother? Jenny and I will be done in a few minutes."

Jenny, however, was of opinion that aid was not to be despised, so when Nell resisted Bess, she came to her rescue, and told her what to do, where to carry the things, and how to place them. Under the auspices of this young damsel, Nelly, to do her justice, made a speedy clearance of the table, accompanied by a good deal of clatter among the dishes, and some slight breakage, whereat Uncle Terry appeared to rejoice greatly.

"You're flying in the face of Providence when you touch work, Nell," he said, laughing; "it hasn't given you the wit to do it, you see."

Nell, who was wiping a platter, instantly laid it down and made a hasty descent on him.

"I'm going to pinch you, I am, truly, Uncle Terry; you do

your best to prevent my ever doing anything good or useful ; you're a sort of white-headed Mephistophiles, you really are."

Berkely's hands were imprisoned in silk. Nelly's prediction was in a fair way to be fulfilled, for Katie had claimed his services as soon as it was decided they should spend the evening in the dining-room. He chafed inwardly at the restraint now, for he saw that Nelly's exertions were over for the evening, she and her uncle were dictating terms to each other, but the old man held her hands pinioned behind her, having thus rather the advantage. Mrs. Morrison laughed immoderately, as she always did at Uncle Terry's pleasantries ; and Katie was absorbed in winding what seemed to Berkely a skein without an end, and no one noticed how pale Bess Saunders had become, or how her hands trembled as she bent to brush up the crumbs that had fallen in Nell's removing the cloth.

" Miss Saunders, pray don't attempt to move that table ; wait a moment," and to Katie's consternation, Berkely threw the silk in her lap, and, springing past her, seized the dining-table from Bess's hands and pushed it over into the corner of the room, where he saw she meant it to go.

" Now, Bess, sit down, will you, before you fall down ; you're not like yourself to-night at all, and I'm sure it's the scorching you got over the kitchen fire cooking the cakes. It would suit us all better if we learned to save you trouble instead of giving it to you."

Mrs. Morrison arose and made a pretense of putting the chairs to rights ; took up and laid down several things, and continued to beseech her niece to rest. Bess declared roundly that she had never felt less tired in her life, and rallied the instant she found herself observed. But, strive as she would, it was impossible for her now that she was seated quietly at the renovating of her aunt's cap, to look free from care or at ease. Nelly having wrestled herself weary, sat down beside her and directed the placing of the bows.

" Don't heed Nell, Bess ; she knows no more about cap making than the child unborn. She can coggle up leaves and flowers for her own head bravely, but for a woman of my years she hasn't

the knack. I'd be a laughing stock if I'd put on the things she and Katie advise me to."

"How can you say so, mother? I think it really unkind; and here Katie and I have been the whole day arranging a head dress for you to meet Larry's wife in. It's nearly done, and looks lovely, don't it, Kate?"

Katie assented, but said her sister had promised not to mention it till it was complete. She was rather out of temper with Berkely for tossing her silk, but as anger with her was only an accession of dignity, she displayed no frowns, and simply reproved Nelly for indiscretion.

"We'd have to try it on, any how, you know," said Nell, in defence of her confidence. "Shan't I bring it down?"

"Well, I suppose you may as well, now that you've mentioned it," Katie said, and her sister flew up stairs without waiting for further parley.

It was a very pretty head-dress when produced; made in a much more modern style than Mrs. Morrison's usually were, and shaped more like a turban than an ordinary cap.

The first glance at it threw their mother into a state of consternation.

"I'll never let such a looking contrivance near my head," she averred solemnly. "Sure, it's fitter for a Cannibal queen than a Christian widow. That I may never sin," she added, breathlessly, "but they have got a wreath of posies on it as if it was for the Queen of May."

"I told you so," said Katie, resignedly. "I said, 'Nell, it's useless to attempt inducing mother to put on anything but those close old pokey things, bound under her chin as if she were a mummy.'"

"You may call me anything you like after expecting me to put on them fal-lals."

"Bess didn't make it, that's the whole secret," said Katie, smiling with an expression of injured sweetness. "Of course we never could expect to do anything that would equal Bess's taste."

"I never could have arranged anything half so pretty," said

Bess frankly, and she took up the cap and regarded it with admiration.

"Is it the flowers you object to, aunt? They are very beautiful, but I think Katie can arrange it just as nicely with this lilac gauze ribbon in loose bows—look—in this way. What do you think?"

"I think it would make all the change in life," said Mrs. Morrison, convinced at once. "It's the flowers, as you say, Bess, and I wonder at the girls, I do, for their want of wit."

Nelly fell in with her cousin's suggestion, though still she declared the flowers were prettier; but Katie, though she neither frowned nor looked provoked, declined to meddle with the bow question.

"Bess knows how she means them to go on, much better than we do, and can carry out her own idea. Pray allow her to do it, Nell; you'll only spoil it for mother's taste if you touch it."

Bess had finished re-arranging the trimming Nell's frolic had displaced, and giving her aunt the cap, she now took up the new one and came and laid it on Katie's lap.

"I will not touch it," she said decidedly; "I never could have designed anything so stylish, and I only named the bows as a compromise for the roses. Aunt, I think you might give Katie your opinion about the ribbon. This lilac is very pretty, but if you would like another shade it's easily gotten, you know."

"I like that well enough, if there's no escape from such gewgaws. What's Larry's wife that a body must needs go out of their old ways for her?"

"She's a young lady accustomed to taste and elegance no doubt, and I, for one, consider it my duty to make any sacrifice in my power for Larry's sake."

Katie said this with a noble disinterestedness that Uncle Terry maliciously marred by adding:

"And may there never be a harder one in store for you than to dress yourself out to advantage."

"Bess bought a new chenille cover for the piano, mother," said Nelly. "It has not come home yet, but she says it is like the Daceys', and you know we thought that one lovely. Cousin

Berkely, learn to get used to these family confidences, please ; it's a weakness of ours to rejoice, like the scriptural woman over the piece of silver, about every new bit of furniture we get, and this piano cover's been an object of longing for months."

Katie's face became gentle and winning as it had been before the episode of the cap. She looked sweetly at Bess, and said abstractedly :

"If those red velvet ottomans were re-covered how nice it would be."

Bess answered instantly, with something like vexation in her tone :

"I thought you said it was more important to have those frames re-gilt. I'm so sorry, for I ordered the man for to-morrow morning."

Katie looked very amiable.

"How thoughtful in you about those glasses," she said, "they were so dingy when the parlors were fully lighted last time, that I was distressed to look at them. But the ottomans are just as bad—" she stopped and glanced sideways at Bess.

"Why, Bess," exclaimed Nelly, suddenly, "didn't you say once —let me see—it was a month or two before Larry went away— that you thought you'd get new easy-chairs and a pair of those inlaid tables."

Bess's face changed color, only for an instant, however, but her voice, when she spoke, reminded Berkely of the night he came home.

"I did think of it ; but it is better to wait till spring now. I will be very busy and shall not have time for more than I spoke of."

"It don't take much time to go shopping, Bess," urged Nell "and I should like to awe Larry's wife with our grandeur."

"It's not likely that we shall be able to do that," said Katie · "Cousin Berkely says they live in splendor."

"I shall have to be up early to see about the gilding," said Bess, rising suddenly, "so I'll say good-night."

Mrs. Morrison followed her uneasily with her eyes as she left the room abruptly.

"Nell, could you find nothing else to do but worry your cousin about getting new furniture? I think there's enough on her shoulders, and she feels it too, for she's engaged Ellen O'Toole for the rest of the winter."

"Thank Heaven for that," cried Nell, devoutly. "Now Uncle Terry will be deprived of one of his enjoyments—teasing me abou Bess's industry. Oh, what a relief!"

Berkely and Katie had been keeping up a desultory conversation, interrupted, momentarily, by Katie herself joining in the furniture discussion. They now abandoned it altogether, and Katie said:

"What is a relief? Of whom are you talking, Nell?"

"Bessie has engaged Ellen O'Toole, mother says, and I'm delighted both for her sake and mine."

"And so am I," said Katie, approvingly. "I shall have time to enjoy myself now, without the drudgery of dusting on my mind constantly. That was one of Bess's strange delusions, I'm truly thankful it has exploded at last."

Uncle Terry sighed and shook his head dolorously.

"The Lord help Ellen O'Toole," he said, "and send her broad shoulders; there'll be a wonderful burden ready for them when she comes here."

"Uncle Terry, will you give me a moment or two about that business? I saw the doctor, and he gave me the papers to look over."

Berkely rose, and the old man followed his example.

"I'll go up to your room with you. I'm glad you made the bargain, for they're rising in value more and more since they've built up the streets out that way," he said, as they went up stairs.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER BLOW.

When the breakfast bell rang next morning, Berkely found, on going down, that a coarse cloth cover was spread on the parlor carpet, and that the two great mirrors were taken from the walls and laid on trestles, with the gilders hard at work on them.

The dining-room was warm and cheerful, and Bess bustled in and out of the kitchen bringing the dishes for breakfast Mrs. Morrison was warming her hands at the stove, and the young ladies stood at each window twirling their morning-gown tassels, a favorite occupation before breakfast. Uncle Terry had not come down yet.

"It's ruthlessly cold," said Berkely; "I used to long for the sight of snow, now I think it's a miserably unsatisfactory affair."

"Yes, it's cold, Berkely," said his aunt, "but nothing to what you may expect. I forgot it was warmer when you came for and argued with Bess against putting that air-tight stove in your room; but it seems she was in the right of it."

"Miss Saunders, your foresight marks you a superior being: that stove is the comfort of my existence," said Berkely. He went to the window, through which Nell was watching the boys in the side street dance and revel in the snow. "I remember when I was just as enthusiastic on the same subject. It's very unmanly to dread the elements now, but it actually makes one shiver to see them bounding about, as they are, with their red hands and glowing noses."

"Here's uncle and the coffee announced together—come and thaw your frozen mood, cousin Berkely," said Katie.

From his seat, opposite the kitchen door, Berkely beheld a colossal female enter, while breakfast was still in progress, and on tip-toe laboriously cross the floor. She was not only very tall but very broad and stout, and wore a thick double

shawl that made her still stouter. She had a small set of features in a wide expanse of face, and was particularly cut-off in the article of nose. Her expression was placid in the extreme, but in nowise remarkable, if you excepted the odd habit she had of accompanying every movement she made by a motion of her mouth. Her object in entering with such elaborate caution was evidently not to disturb the morning meal, but the look of palpable astonishment on Berkely's face, as his eyes greeted this vision, attracted Nell's attention, who, looking into the kitchen to see the cause, burst out laughing.

"Why, it's Ellen O'Toole, Berkely! What's the matter with you? One would think you'd seen a ghost, only Ellen's too substantial for that."

Berkely drew a long breath and looked around.

"She's really intimidating," he said in a whisper. "Miss Saunders, I congratulate you on securing a daughter of the Titans."

Bess laughed. "I should have prepared you for the arrival," she said, adding as they left the table, "Be at dinner to the moment, these are busy days, you know."

As Berkely ran up for his cloak and hat, before going out, Mrs. Morrison called to him from her room:

"Come in here on your way down, please Berkely; I want to speak with you."

He found his aunt standing by an old fashioned bureau, in an apartment filled with furniture of that style. Every article, from the ponderous bedstead down to the little light-stand, was heavily carved and darkened with age, till they seemed more like ebony than mahogany.

"You're looking at the old furniture, I know," said Mrs. Morrison: "well, it's part of the plenishing of the first house we ever had in the country; they were not new then, for we bought them at a vendue, but somehow they're more worth to me than all the new-fangled things that could be bought now."

She regarded an old style of writing-table, half desk, half

escritoire, fondly. "At that very desk your own father has written time and again, and it's the place your uncle kept all his private papers in, from the day we came to America till he died." She opened it, saying—"And that reminds me of what I want to ask of you. You heard the girls bother Bess about the big red stools in the parlor being covered, and them knowing well enough, or they ought to know, how much she has to do. Well, I want you to do me the favor of stopping at an upholsterer's—I have his card here—and sending him for them, if he can make it convenient to have them done for us in time."

Berkely protested that he would be delighted to do so, and begged his aunt to think of any other way in which he might be of use.

"If you do that, it's all I'll ask of you now; but be sure, if there's anything else I want done, it's you I'll come to, Berkely dear." She looked in a recess of the drawer, then on the mantel-piece, then in her pocket, and finally went into a thorough search. "It's the workman's card I'm looking for," she said; "where in all the world could I have put it?"

"Won't any upolsterer do, aunt?" Berkely asked at length, seeing no chance of success.

"No, no, for you see he has the brocatelle that was put on the rest of the furniture, and it was that stuff, I heard Bess say, she would like for these stools. Just wait a bit now, and I'll away down and take a look around the dining-room."

Leaving Berkely standing in her doorway, Mrs. Morrison bustled down stairs, brushing as she went the figure of an elegantly dressed lady, whom Jenny Brackett was escorting up.

"She wants to see Miss Bess, mum," explained that young damsel in passing; "Miss Bess told me to fetch her up to her room, 'cause the men's in the parlors."

Mrs. Morrison merely nodded to Jenny; the lady's face was veiled and turned away, so to her she said nothing.

Berkely, being a young man, made a pretense of lingering, that he might see the face belonging to the graceful figure ; but the lady almost darted in at the door Jenny held open for her, and seemed anxious to avoid all observation.

Berkely turned into his aunt's room again and threw himself into her easy-chair to wait for her return. Presently Bess's footsteps sounded on the stair, and he saw her cross the hall and turn the knob of her door ; before it was closed, she said :

"Did you want to see me?" and then added in a tone of surprise, "Miss West?"

The door was shut, but still Berekly heard the answer, "Yes ; hush, please, I want to speak to you. I have been waiting to meet you for the last fortnight, but could not. Miss Saunders, I know you'll despise me when I've done speaking, but my mind's made up to bear it."

A little door connecting Bess's room with her aunt's explained the ease with which Berkely heard these words ; it was a trifle ajar : his aunt had left it so when she glanced in to see if the missing card could be on Bess's mantelpiece.

Miss Saunders made no answer, and in a moment the strange lady continued :

"What I tell you is to my own shame and confusion. Look at me, and think a while, and you'll suspect and shrink from me."

Another moment of silence and then Bess's voice reached Berkely, saying very gently :

"I have no right to sit in judgment on you ; if you have any trouble to tell me, I'm truly sorry for you, but pray spare yourself"——

"If humbling myself had any worth in it now, I should not spare myself, Miss Saunders ; but it's all done and can't be helped. I'll tell the truth just as it is ; if you can find any mercy for me in your own heart, it's more than I have for myself."

For a little while the speaker seemed to pause for self-

control or to be unable to find the words she needed ; but by-and-bye she said :

" I was working here for nearly two months, and I thought your Cousin Lawrence Morrison a very handsome man ; one night it was raining terribly, and he ran after me with an umbrella and sheltered me all the way home. Then I thought him kind as well as handsome ; after that he waited for me nightly and talked to me so that I had only one thought in all my mind, which was how I loved him. I do not attempt to justify myself, it's simple truth to say he promised to marry me ; and bought me handsome clothes, and said I must give up sewing. I never doubted him until my doubts were too late to do me service."

She stopped a while and seemed to walk up and down the floor ; suddenly she began again :

" I didn't come here to make a lament, as you may know ; I fought the battle with my own heart long ago, and I came off changed, but conqueror. I neither grieve nor waste my days in idle regret. I am working hard in a new scene ; there's nothing around me to bring back what's gone, and I never name it even to my own soul. I had to tell you this, to make you understand me ; the rest is soon said. I know all about him now, liar and traitor that he is, and have come to you to do a duty. I saw you long enough to guess a little at your nature, and I know it ; you're proud, but you'll forgive me when I say, I know he deceived you, because you know now how much bitterer my heart should be than yours. The night before he left for New York you gave him two thousand dollars, fifteen hundred of which you got in a mortgage on your house, and five hundred that you had of your annuity. You see I know it all, but I declare to you I did not know it till a fortnight ago."

" Who told you then ?" Bess asked faintly.

" His own folly ; he's a short-sighted villain, and left the papers with me by mistake. You may think that I have but little reason to hold his secrets sacred. He told you that the money was absolutely necessary to his success in business

Do you guess what he really meant it for? Listen, and think if such a wretch is worth a sigh or regretful thought. It was to buy me off from following him; had he staid here I might have given him trouble. I was desperate then, you see, so he worked his game to go away, and pay me to be quiet. In my rage and misery I scarcely understood him till he was gone, and then I took a fever. You hardly knew me when you came in. I don't wonder; I sometimes do not know myself, for I got up an altered woman. I have work to do that keeps me from thinking, that gives excitement to my life, and I don't covet solitude or memory. All this is nothing to you, but this money is, it's part of what I owe you. Please don't shrink away; listen to reason. I couldn't touch that wretch's money; it would kill me. When I was sick they took part of it, but I'll make it up in time to you; I can, easily, and I'll send it, for I'll never trouble you myself again. Here it is, one thousand dollars he left for me; this holds eight hundred, the very bills he gave me; there are two hundred wanting that I could have had, but for the wardrobe I've had to buy."

"Take the money away. It is not mine. Oh take it away," Bess said in a faint, trembling voice.

"I won't keep it, Miss Saunders; shall I send it back to him?"

"Do what you please with it, only for God's sake take it and go"

The women seemed to look at each other silently—then the actress said firmly:

"I'll give it to his mother, and tell her the story; I swear to Heaven I will, if you refuse it now."

"Give it to me," said Bess, eagerly, "give it to me. Go and God help you. I wish from the depths of my soul I could have died without knowing this. No, no, don't come near me; go, please go."

The door opened, closed again, and the rustling silks of the stranger fluttered down the stairs and out at the door Berkely sprang up and in noiseless haste flew down after her.

A dread of Miss Saunders finding him listening came upon him when she and her companion had ceased speaking; not till then had he the least idea of eaves-dropping, from the first sound that fell on his ear till the last died away, he was conscious of no feeling except intense interest in the speakers. Below stairs the men were still busy working at their gilding, and there was no one else in sight. Suddenly he remembered his aunt and went towards the dining-room The door was opened by the brawny Ellen, who said to some one within:

"It's herself 'll know better nor any of us. She's in her room, and I'll fly up till her."

"Where's Mrs. Morrison?" demanded Berkely, thinking meantime of some pretext to prevent her breaking in on Bess's solitude.

"She's inside, sur, an' don't be troublin' her, she's in a great way wid the milkman's bill, an' we can't find Miss Bess to tell us about it," said Ellen, still, from her attitude, intent on flying up.

"Oh, Berkely, dear, what ever can you think of me for leaving you standing so long. I was just so put out with the milkman's account, that I forgot everything. Wait a bit."

She had a long slip of paper in her hand, and running to the kitchen door she handed it to a man, whose profile lay in relief against it, saying: "Come in the morrow and it'll be settled; I can neither see head nor tail to it till Bess explains it."

The milkman readily departed, admitting the wisdom of Mrs. Morrison's decision, and adding that he "was a wondering she hadn't done it afore."

"You didn't find the card, I suppose, aunt?" said Berkley.

"No then, I did not, Berkely, and it's just that same milkman has to answer for it. I couldn't remember what it was I had come down for, with his quarts of this and pints of that. What is the matter, Ellen; is anything wrong with you?"

"No, ma'am," said the alighting Ellen; "but there's something wrong wid Miss Bess, I'm feared, for she didn't hear me knock, so I opened the door and found her lying on the floor

wid her head between her knees, in a quare way, and I couldn't make her sinsible of how the milkman was overcharging yez, dc what I would."

Berkely caught his aunt's arm. "Go up quickly, aunt, and do something for her. Give her—yes, yes, give her a glass of that old sherry—make her drink it whether she will or not."

As he was hastily insisting on this receipt to be administered by his aunt, Miss Saunders opened the dining-room door.

"I've been frightening poor Ellen, I'm afraid," she said, laughing. "I've had that miserable neuralgia again, and I haven't a particle of courage or patience under pain. Don't look alarmed, Ellen, it's better now ; I'm so selfish that while it lasts, I give up to wailing without thinking how I'll frighten people."

"Shall I wait for that card, my dear aunt?" asked Berkely, resignedly ; in pity he neither looked at or spoke to Bess.

"No, no. Berkely, dear, I'll step over myself when I have a spare moment or two, for I know where to find the store bravely, without being able to tell any one else."

"Find what?" asked Bess from the kitchen, whither she had followed Ellen.

"Well then, dear, you may as well know it first as last. I've got a notion in my head to have the two big stools covered ; Bess, I've got the money laying by me, and what else to do with it, I don't know."

"I know, then, which will do as well." Bess shook her head as she spoke, reprovingly. "You know, aunt, well enough that you promised me to get yourself a new lavender silk. It is well I caught you, if you meant to break your word in that dishonorable way."

CHAPTER IX.

TABLEAUX.

Bess carried her point, for that evening when Berkely came home to tea, the lavender silk was one of the events of the day, and was displayed to him in the dining-room by his two cousins, who had been shopping all the afternoon.

"Gentlemen in general don't like to be bored by ladies' purchases," said Nelly. "But Larry spoilt us by taking an interest in everything we bought. By-the-bye, has any one told you the news, cousin Berkely? No; then hear it from me. We have had a letter from Larry, and he and his wife will be here on the 21st. So Bess has only a week for all her wonderful arrangements."

"I knew you'd be charmed," said Katie to Berkely, from whose face everything like expression was banished in his effort to prevent their guessing how much he sympathized with Bess in any fresh announcement. "We got the letter just after you went out, and there are so many things one needs for company, that Nell and I started at once and set to work."

"Look at this lace, if you understand such things, Berkely; if you don't, I hope you'll refrain from making a remark. Isn't it exquisite?"

"I don't understand laces, cousin Nell," Berkely confessed; "but I think that this is pretty."

"Pretty, why it's beautiful. Bess," she called out to her cousin, who was initiating Ellen O'Toole into the mystery of laying the cloth for tea, "do you know I saw point, exquisitely delicate point, almost as handsome as the set your mother left you, but I kept my eyes steadily fixed on the valenciennes, and never uttered a sigh for it. Katie wasn't so firm, she went and priced it."

"That was Katie all out and out," laughed Uncle Terry "Nothing's a trouble to her, that would beautify her, if she had it. Isn't it so, Peggy?"

"You're just saying that because the poor child forgot your coffee this morning, uncle. It's not fair in you. Sure every decent creature likes decent clothes on their back; Katie's none the worse for her taste, I think."

Mrs. Morrison, though she would not have acknowledged it, was in a singularly placid state concerning the lavender silk. She looked keenly at Berkely out of the corner of her eye when he was called to admire it. With the air of rather disparaging it, she remarked, "I fear it's too gay for my years," and when he waived all her fictitious objections by declaring that it was at once suitable and beautiful, she expanded into a happy good humor that was delightful to behold. Indeed Larry's letter had put them all in high, good spirits, and Berkely found it almost impossible to believe that they had ever been so averse to his marriage.

"All great reforms are preceded by unpleasant irruptions, and we are going to be deprived of our parlor for a day or two, and be obliged to smell varnish for as many more. What do you think of the prospect, cousin?" Nelly asked this after tea, when the table was rolled away, and the crumbs brushed up. "I used to think it rather pleasant to stay in here, but now we're obliged to do it, I think it a terrible bore."

"What is being done in the parlor?" he asked; "I thought the gilding was all that was decided on."

"Oh, Bess became reasonable, and sent for an upholsterer; so we're to have new cornices for the curtains, two new easy-chairs, and the old ones covered with beautiful chintz for Larry's room. Just think of all this! beside everything being polished, and new covers for the ottomans."

"Mr. Morrison, if you find such splendor hard to realize, you can aid your imagination by looking at this."

Bess came out of the kitchen, holding a large iced cake in her hands, ornamented with all sorts of pretty devices. She looked very handsome, for her usually pale face glowed with color, and her eyes were bright and flashing.

"It must be of your own making, I'm sure, from that look of pride in your handiwork. Am I right?"

"Yes ; I made it," she answered, with a short laugh of exultation. "It's for Christmas ; do you wonder why I made it so soon ? well, I'll tell you. It's a fruit cake, and the longer they are kept the nicer they are, so I got Ellen and Jenny to help me, and made it to-day while all were out."

"Am I to be very deeply impressed with it, or have I oh'd enough over it," asked Berkely, gravely.

"I really don't think you have been very profuse in your admiration, but I don't mind, since Nelly and Katie say they thought it came from a confectioner's. That was a compliment, you know."

"Yes ; and I think it really a miracle of skill," interposed Nelly, warmly. "Bess took the pattern of the flowers off those aprons you gave us, and those geometrical looking quiverycues in the middle, are her own idea."

"I shall make another ; I've done so well with this," said Bess, proudly, "that I really feel it a duty to cultivate the talent."

"Uncle Terry," said Katie, suddenly, "you know how unmercifully you have teased me about tangling silk, as you call it ? I just wish you to look at these little mats and cushions for the "What-not," and acknowledge the error of your ways. Those alabaster and parian figures wouldn't show at all, if it were not for this bright scarlet to throw them in relief."

"Dear, oh dear !" murmured Uncle Terry, as if awe-struck with the force of her words. "Would any one ever think of that, if they weren't told ? It is just wonderful, the usefulness of Katie's work. You and I know well enough, Peggy, that if it wasn't for the likes of these elegancies it would hardly be worth striving to live at all."

"I didn't expect you to acknowledge yourself wrong, uncle," said Katie, smiling, "so I'm not disappointed a bit. But come, Bess and Nellie, and let us all lay our heads together, and con ure up the plan for the week."

"Where's Larry's letter, mother ? Berkely might like to see it. There, I knew you would mislay it, when I saw you wandering round with it in your hand. Never mind, now. Cousin, you

must know that Larry has only a week to spend, and that the Waters have some friends here who have insisted on two days at least ; so, you see, we must make the most of our time."

Nelly drew the chairs close to the sofa, where Berkely and Uncle Terry were sitting.

"Uncle," she whispered, insinuatingly, "don't you want to go over to Dacey's ? the old doctor was speaking of you this afternoon when we called ; wasn't he, Katie ?" But, seeing no sign of relenting in her uncle's face, she suddenly changed her tone, and exclaimed :

"Now, just let us make him promise not to tease us, or laugh at every suggestion made. Berkely, do help us to subdue him, won't you ?"

"What have I done to you that you're flying at me in this way ? and striving to hustle me out of the house too. Faith, it's time for folk to look to themselves when they're threatened in this sort."

Uncle Terry put on a look of martyr-like resignation, and the girls laughed. Katie came and sat down by him, and Nelly opened the proceedings solemnly.

"The 20th comes on Tuesday ; so Larry will be here a week from to-day, in the three o'clock train ; that will make it nearly four when they arrive, and the reception will last till tea's ready. After tea, Larry's old friends, the Daceys, Kings, Lindleys and Littles, will call, so that evening's provided for."

"Yes," interposed Katie, "and you know that the Daceys said to-day they wanted us to secure Thursday for them ; and the Littles have named Saturday for us all to drink tea there."

"Which leaves us only Wednesday and Friday of that week," said Nell.

"No ; there is only Friday for us," said Bess ; "on Wednesday aunt was to go with them to dine with Larry's new connections."

"To be sure," cried Nell ; "I forgot that."

Berkely looked up at Bess quickly. He was breathless with astonishment to hear the gay, careless voice in which she spoke of the man who had worked her such evil.

Apparently unconscious of his glance, she went on :

" So I think we may as well have our tableaux on Friday ; it will be Christmas Eve ; and a family dinner next day, with tea at the Littles, and a sight of their Christmas tree will finish the week."

" Capitally," said Katie, approvingly ; " but let us be particular about one thing : let every tableau be decided on before they come, and all the things got ready. You remember those the Parkers arranged last Christmas ? the terrible hubbub took away all the pleasure. They had to buy lamp-wick for Sappho's hair after the company arrived ; and Bess had to rush home for a heavy linen sheet to make Virginius a toga."

" Yes," said Nell ; " and the powder fell off the fairies' faces while they were kept waiting ; and the Queen of Sheba's crown got worked round till the part with no gilding could be seen ; and one of Titania's wings fell off on the floor as she was being shown."

Berkely laughed heartily.

" If anything could be done to avoid such wholesale distraction, I think, with Katie, it would be well to see to it," he said.

" You know, cousin," said Katie, whose amiably confidential manner was very becoming to her, " it is highly important that we do these tableaux grandly; and, to tell you the truth, I know we shall, for the Daceys never could have had those Shakespearian scenes if it hadn't been for us. I'm glad now that we helped them as much as we did, for they have quite a collection of things that we can borrow for ours."

" Let us have something in which Berkely can wear a cloak and slouched hat," said Nell, looking critically at her cousin ; " he would make a lovely villain."

" Good gracious," cried Berkely, in alarm, " I beg you won't mention it. I think I could do something in the way of lighting up, or hanging curtains, but further than the mechanical part I wouldn't dare to aspire. I shall enjoy them beyond expression; the mere idea is exciting."

" Is there never an old ruffian wanting ?" asked Uncle Terry,

meekly. "I would be made up entirely if you could find an opening for me."

"There, I told you," cried Nell, "Uncle Terry would have his fling at us. I knew it."

"Will I not be suffered to open my mouth, Nell?" he asked.

"Uncle," said Katie, sweetly, "pray don't notice Nell; she always gets excited when there's anything to be done."

Bess had a slip of paper and a portfolio. "Will you lend me a pencil, Mr. Morrison, and I'll take a list of the tableaux, so as to find out what will be needed," she said.

"What's all this clashing about; are ye plotting treason with your heads laid close together?" asked Mrs. Morrison, returning from carrying up the purchases that had been on exhibition. The girls began to talk together by way of explanation.

"We're arranging tableaux for Christmas Eve, aunt," said Bess, when the rest had exhausted the theme and reduced her aunt to the verge of insanity by talking at the same time of the Daceys, Waters, Larry's wife, and Berkely's possible aid in making a curtain."

"Then it's just a parcel of Judies you're going to make of yourselves, and so I tell you. When I was a growing girl, no such nonsense was heard of among the folk, but now it seems to me the people have taken leave of their wits."

Mrs. Morrison's features were never classic, but now she rubbed up her nose irascibly till it was decidedly pug.

"Mother might do for a Helen of Troy if we could get her to wear sleeveless muslin," said Nell, meditatively.

Her mother took the suggestion extremely ill.

"Do you hear that, Berkely?" she cried; "isn't it enough to turn my hair white, the disrespect of them that I've taught better? No, Nelly, if it was to be the making of you for life, I wouldn't go into a tableau as Helen or any one else. Sure I've two thicknesses of flannel on my arms, forbye a pad on my chest for the cough I had last winter."

Nelly laughed uproariously. "Then we'll have to give up

the idea, mother," she said. "But what a pity that you can't take off your flannel."

Bess held the pencil suspended in her fingers.

"I want to begin," she said. "Six will be enough, I think; what shall I put down first?"

"Let us be as classic as possible; that style only needs white muslin and gold bands." Katie made this suggestion, as she ran over on her fingers the dresses that might be made available.

"Then," said Berkely, "if I might suggest, I would say that the Judgment of Paris would be a fine subject. You couldn't have a more classic shepherd that Mr. Little, and you three could do the goddesses to perfection."

"That would be nice, if I could wear a helmet," said Katie "I'm not tall enough for Juno, nor broad enough for Venus, and a helmet spoils the shape of my face."

"Katie Morrison, I'd be obliged to you if you would respect people's figures," said Nell, testily. "Broad enough for Venus, she says, and looks straight at me. Whoever heard of Venus being broad? Cousin, I think it would make a glorious picture; and there's Bell Dacey, that a helmet makes absolutely beautiful—she wore one as Liberty, because the cap looked blowsy."

"Bell Dacey isn't capable of expression," said Katie; "besides, I've thought of a way in which I can manage the helmet. Now about Juno; isn't your hair too light, Bess?"

"I'm afraid it is," admitted Bess. "Carrie Little has fine black hair, and will look majestic."

"Carrie Little's an inch shorter than I am," exclaimed Katie; "the idea of her being majestic is absurd."

"I meant that we could stand her on a block, and let her skirt fall over it. We did that in Bell Dacey's tableaux," said Bess, mildly.

Uncle Terry glanced at Berkely, and both burst into laughter.

"It's live and learn, Berkely," said the old man. "Homer himself would never have thought of such a device to give height to a goddess!"

"Still I declare in favor of Miss Saunders' Juno," said Berkely. "Although I acknowledge Miss Little would be irresistible, particularly if the block were a tall one."

"You think it silly, I know," said Bess; "but wait till you see the effect."

"Let us have something comical, and leave it to Berkely and uncle to arrange; that will occupy their spare time, and use up their superfluous wit, too," said Nell, significantly.

"Then," said Bess, "let us have Cleopatra discovered dead in the tomb of Isis. Adah Parker is really magnificent in antique scarlet and gold, and her brother has a suit of Roman armor, and can be one of the soldiers. Then there's that beautiful Turkish suit that we can get from them for Katie, to be Gulnare in. You would do a scene from the Corsair, wouldn't you, Katie?"

"Certainly," said Katie, smilingly; "but don't you think something with Medora on it would suit your style. I do want Bess to do something that will show how splendid her hair is."

Katie spoke earnestly. The Turkish dress was a favorite vanity of hers, and in the delight of the idea, she was willing to allow Bess had fine hair. She even went further; for looking at her thoughtfully for a moment, she exclaimed:

"Why couldn't Bess do a Judith? of course she could; a turban would take off the effect of her hair, and her eyes are the very thing. There, we'll have 'Judith killeth Holofernes,' and that with the two comical devices of our wits here, will complete the list."

At this announcement, Bess further astonished Berkely by going into genuine ecstacies at the thought of wearing a turban. No light-hearted child could have expressed greater pleasure at a promised doll than this woman, whom he had thought outraged in soul and broken in spirit, did in the hope of wearing a black scarf embroidered with gold around her head.

The number and style of the tableaux being decided upon, the whole party immediately went into a spirited consideration of what was needed to dress them, and who should be

chosen to present the different characters. Uncle Terry, dispite his cynicism, proved himself a really important ally, for he had studied costume largely from old plays, and having a singularly fine memory, could repeat every passage verbatim that they wished to illustrate. Berkely threw his abilities into making out a programme, and Katie wrote a few notes to be dispatched early in the morning to the families whose possessions or services they required. To lose no time, Bess and Nelly hauled out of a store-closet, in the upper hall, three or four great paper boxes containing a debris of ribbons, gold and silver paper, spangles, tarleton, and crushed flowers, and carrying them down to the dining-room, spread them out for investigation. Berkely and Uncle Terry went to work at separating the different fabrics, and Nelly and Bess smoothed them out nicely.

"There's work enough begun to-night," said Mrs. Morrison, in a tone of displeasure. "Do any of you know what time it is, or do you mean to go to your beds at all?"

Berkely was astonished at his aunt's objecting to their plans for Larry's entertainment; beside her love and pride in her only son, she was naturally so genial and kind-hearted, that her coldness on the tableaux question seemed inexplicable.

"Don't you think they will be pleasant, aunt?" he asked, referring to the list he had made out, and which she was regarding with great disfavor.

"It's just another name for play-actoring," she returned, sternly. "Sure I went over to Dacey's with the girls to a great to-do they got up of this kind, and they had a green curtain hung across the parlors, and everything fixed off like a theayter. That was bad enough; but when they rolled it up and showed Nellie with scarcely half her clothes on her back, and a couple of wings fastened on her, standing on tip-toe like a public dancer, and smiling as bold as you please on a young man in his bare legs, lying at her feet, with the head of a jackass on his shoulders, I was that mortified, Berkely, dear, that I could have sunk through the floor with shame. I

never held up my head again nor looked at the creatures; but I'll warrant you Katie was just as bad, and Bess, too, that I had more hope of. Oh, it's a burning shame!"

"Mother, I think you speak disgracefully; the idea of talking of Mr. Harrington as you did. Berkely, I hope you don't think that. Oh, I'm really annoyed at you, mother," and Nelly, flushed and angry, burst into tears.

"Let us put them aside for to-night, Nell," said Bess, kindly. "Aunt, I think you don't know how pretty these tableaux will be, and every one will wear plenty of clothes, and it will give us pleasure. So I know you won't go against it, will you?"

"I'm not going against you, lass; and Nellie has little to do that she sits up there, tooting, as if some one had taken a stick to her. Have your own plays; but when I was a growing girl such doings were the diversions of Punch and Judy, in a booth at a fair."

Thus entering her last protest, Mrs. Morrison took up her lamp and retired, giving Uncle Terry a look of amazement, at his interest in the theatrical properties.

The old man shook his head as she left the room, and sighed.

"Isn't it wonderful," he said to Berkely, "that these children will set themselves up in the face of their parent's authority, and without regard to her displeasure go their own gait?"

Berkely was not so modern in his opinions and tastes that he had forgotten the school of absolute obedience and respect to parents in which he had been reared; the idea of ignoring it now filled him with distress.

"Uncle Terry," said he, "I do sincerely wish that my aunt was better pleased; is she really principled against these things?"

Uncle Terry, whose sombre countenance had been assumed, threw it aside and laughed heartily.

"May be you won't believe me, Berkely, when I tell you that not one of us will be better pleased with the flurry

you're going to have, than Peggy Morrison. It's a way she has of settling any little gaiety that's going on with her own conscience. After she's had her say out, there's not another frown'll be seen on her face. Every one has their grave times, and Peggy's such a harmless creature, we may easily allow her that one."

CHAPTER X.

BESS A DEBTOR.

True to Uncle Terry's prediction, Mrs. Morrison's face was as clear and sunny as a May morning, when the tableaux next were broached. Everybody and everything was in a state of preparation, during the next week, and Berkely, permeated with the universal spirit of industry, found himself hurrying home from his lawyer's, where the deeds of transfer were settled, and in a breathless way assuming an old coat of Larry's, and hammering away in the back kitchen at the stage for the tableaux, or nearly dislocating his neck twining evergreen round the picture frames. Every new touch given to the parlors summoned the whole household together to witness the effect. Even Ellen O'Toole struggled through the kitchen door, drying her arms as she went, to join the admiration excited by every fresh addition. Berkely became conscious of this vassal-like homage on the occasion of his purchasing two choice pictures for either side the hearth. Fearing that he had taken a liberty, he consulted his aunt as to hanging them in the places designed, and found her full of approval, but anxious on the subject of the expenditure. Naming a random price a little over the cost of their carriage home—their real value would have rendered her speechless—he availed himself of the services of the person who accompanied them, and had them hung at once.

Under his aunt's auspices the whole establishment gather-

ed to look on, and when the man departed, began to walk backward in a body to gain the full beauty of the works of art. Joining in this retrogade step, Berkely alighted on the feet of the sturdy Ellen, who not taking it at all ill, assured him in relation to the pictures, that "they were the most wonderfullest things iver she clapt her eyes on"—and further inquired, "if they were tuck from Scripture?"

At last the parlors were complete, and looked, as Nell said, "comparatively gorgeous." The freshened carpets, polished furniture, and new cornices, were all subjects of pride and delight; and it had been the family custom, for the past week, to gather them before the tea bell rang, to exchange remarks of critical admiration on each new feature.

It was on Monday, the day preceding the expected arrivals, Berkely walked slowly and thoughtfully homeward. Everything was complete, so there was no occasion for hurry, and now he began to feel how necessary this excitement had become to him, and in its absence to relapse into troubled speculation on Bess Saunders. His interest in this odd girl, Berkely explained to himself in this wise:

"She was a buoyant, happy creature, blest in her duties and her power of giving happiness, until I came. Larry struck his blow through me, and I am the only confidant of her grief; unwillingly so on her part, but still her confidant." This thought brought him to the door in Burleigh Place. "She is so much the better for this bustle of preparing, that I almost forgive the cowardly scamp for coming here," he thought, and the trouble, that dwelt on his mind always, obtruded itself again. "Will she be able to meet all this expense, and will he repay her the money he was scoundrel enough to borrow?" This bitter idea chafed his spirit, and was the one ghost that haunted him in the midst of his pleasure—for Berkely's life was pleasant. With an intense enjoyment of home and home interests, his youth and manhood having been in the past arid of them all, he was a phenomenon, inasmuch as in their absence he had not lost his power of enjoyment in them when they returned. Fif-

teen years would have hardened most men out of their memories; but Berkely, though keenly alive to business plans and business gains, kept an inner life apart, full of fancies fed from books, and day-dreams born of lonely longings. Had he lived at home, and in the society of women, no doubt he would have married early and become a fireside man of nights, and a busy votary of gain-getting by day; but now he had made his fortune—or, at least, what he was content to consider as such—and had begun to live that portion of his life belonging, of right, to fickle, dreamy youth, when years had matured his fancies into passions, and though they might have stolen some of their fire, had given firmness and strength to his feelings.

To throw his cloak and hat on the rack in the hall, and hurry into the parlor for a new look at its beauties, had been the habit of the week, and he found himself inside the door before he became aware of the fact that Miss Saunders stood in the centre of the room, confronting, with a flushed face, a strange gentleman, who had a cool, implacable, business face, and who was beating a folded paper against his hand and looking coolly around him.

"If you choose you can write to the party who negotiated," he said, as Berkely entered; "but it must be within the next five days; the note is in bank now. It is due on the 26th; you have three days more, and then we shall be obliged to come down on the property."

Bess saw Berkely, who stepped back as if to leave the room. "Stay a moment, Mr. Morrison," she said, after an instant's consideration, in which her face expressed a sharp struggle. "Shut the door, please, and come here." She took the paper from the gentleman's hand and held it in her own, crumpled nervously under her trembling fingers.

"This gentleman comes here on a little business relative to some borrowed money, which I understood to be in the form of a mortgage, but which he assures me was a note to be paid in five months. I am surprised out of the power of thought by this: will you be good enough to think for me?"

"Certainly," said Berkely, eagerly. "But pray let me beg you to give me the papers, and leave me to settle it with this person."

She grew a perfect scarlet as he held out his hand for the bill she was holding.

"No," she said. "Please don't ask me to—to—— I was wrong to ask your assistance, but this surprised me. All I need, is to know if I must pay this bill at once."

Berkely took her hand and led her towards the window, whilst the hard-featured gentleman took up his position in front of a picture in the back parlor.

"I can tell you nothing without seeing the bill; but there is no doubt that it is correct, and that the person presenting it tells you the truth."

"I thought it was a mortgage, and made no provision—that is, no present provision—for it. I am confused beyond description; but aunt must know nothing of it. Oh, remember, aunt must know nothing!"

She looked, as she had said, confused beyond description; her color had all gone, and even her lips were pale; she bit them tremblingly, and, locking her hands together, looked down upon the carpet.

Berkely stepped into the back parlor.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but may I ask your name?"

"Martin & Lessing—there's our card—Brokers and General Agents. This business was done in the regular way, but women will always bother about money matters. I told the young fellow, when he came to negotiate, that I didn't like a woman's name; but the property was good, and he endorsed it, so I did it to oblige him. In point of fact, I came here for the same purpose; for, hearing he'd left town, I thought I'd see the young woman myself, and prevent trouble."

"Was there anything said about a mortgage?"

"Devil a word to us. We don't do that lengthy kind of business; this note is beyond our usual time, but it was to oblige, as I said, to oblige."

"You have left the notice, so I suppose there's nothing more to be attended to, Mr. Martin? The bill will be taken up in due time. Good evening."

Berkely came back from closing the hall door. Bess still stood by the window, but her lips were firm and her hands had ceased to work nervously.

"I can arrange this, I think, Mr. Morrison. I have some property that will not be missed—when I say missed, I mean by my aunt, you know. I have some ready money, too—I can arrange it, only I am selfish, you see, so I have begged you to help me to keep it from my aunt."

A strong wish woke in Berkely's mind, and he struggled for words to express it.

She saw and forestalled him.

"Mr. Morrison," she said, "believe me, you are the only living being to whom I would go for aid. I will come to you, when I cannot help myself; but now it is the only comfort I can know that I may be able to make right the wrong done by my own folly."

Berkely looked sadly at her poor worried face.

"It is sixteen hundred and fifty dollars. I only borrowed fifteen,' she said. "What am I to understand by this?"

"I thought it was two thousand," said Berkely, foolishly.

She looked up quickly, and her eyes gleamed like living coals.

"Did he tell then? Is there no spark of manhood left in his cowardly soul?"

She dashed the paper she had crumpled upon the ground, and held her hands before her face.

"Miserable wretch. I am sick with shame for him," she cried, shuddering.

Berkely would have given a good deal to recall his words, but could not without acknowledging that he had overheard the actress tell her story; so feeling wretchedly uncomfortable, he too looked upon the ground in silence.

Bess Saunders stepped across the floor and stood gazing for a moment out on the darkening twilight in the street;

then she came back again, in a little time, and her voice was low and intense as she spoke :

"Will you please not speak about—about what you know —it makes me sick at soul. You see how I strive to trample out such thoughts, if I did not they would kill me."

She stopped an instant, and made the effort of swallowing, but her throat seemed dry.

"I will have the money to-morrow ; it would not do to wait till then—the strangers are here. I must go out ; how shall I do so without my aunt's missing me ?"

"Will you not let me save you trouble ?" said Berkely, earnestly. "Why cannot I go ?"

"I'll tell you the truth," she said, hastily. "I have, as I said, a small property that—that I have been offered a thousand dollars for, but had a silly desire never to sell. I shall take it to the jeweller's to-night. Yes, it is jewelry, so you see it is no deprivation ; and if I have that much, I can easily give you the rest. I will give it to you to-morrow morning, and you'll spare me so much if you keep those people away from here."

Berkely shrank from the idea of such a sale ; but as he tried to speak, her look forbade him.

"I know what to say now," she exclaimed, gladly. "I'll say I forgot the dart for Nell's hair, and so I did."

She ran past him and quickly up the stairs. In an instant she returned, fastening her cloak around her.

"God bless you, Berkely Morrison," she said, as she stopped one moment to hear his energetic protest against her decision ; but she closed the door after her, and flew down the steps just as the tea-bell sounded.

CHAPTER XI

BESS ACTS A PLAY.

"WELL I declare it seems as if we were not having our supper at all, since Bess is away," said Mrs. Morrison, as she ran every one's cup over into their saucer, and disproportioned the sugar and cream, to Uncle Terry's great annoyance.

"It was just like her to go after that thing to be stuck in your head, Nell, though you need it no more than you do a third eye. Ellen, will you see that something's kept warm for Miss Saunders and Jenny? Mind what she told you about seeing to the jelly she's making for to-morrow night."

"I wish," said Katie, seriously, "that Bess would consent to buy more confectionery, and not bother with making it. Of course we will need a great deal during the visit, and why she persists in buying only the pyramids, and things of that sort, and making everything, like cakes and jellies, I don't pretend to explain."

"Bess is economical," said Uncle Terry, briefly.

Katie and Nelly laughed outright at the idea.

"Bess is twice as bad at spending money as we are; yet she contrives to impress mother and uncle with the belief that she's miserly. I wish I possessed that kind of tact, Berkely, that enables one to do as they please, and impress others with the idea they've been self-denying." And Katie sighed in a coquettish way as who should say, "I'm too natural to be anything but myself."

"I think you're both right," said Berkely, looking at Nelly and Uncle Terry. "In some things, Miss Saunders seems prodigal—in others, singularly careful; but her prodigality is always where other's comforts are considered; her economy where her own care and labor can take the place of expense."

"I wish," said Nell, approvingly, "that we could always take time to discriminate so wisely when we arraign cousin Bess.

Katie and I are too apt to put down as odd and eccentric any thing we are too lazy or selfish to do ourselves."

"Take care, Nell, take care, lass," cried Uncle Terry, in affected horror; "if you talk that way, I shall feel I have lost ye forever. Faith, an hour of that kind of discourse would alter ye, so that the mother that bore ye wouldn't know her child."

The door-bell rang.

"Run quick, Jenny," said Mrs. Morrison. "It's Bess, and the night's too cold to keep her waiting on the step."

It was Bess, but she had given Jenny the little package for Nelly, and gone up to her own room. Nelly caught it from Jenny's hand, and undoing the box, regarded it with enthusiasm.

"It's perfectly beautiful," she cried; "and just as Berkely says, a great deal handsomer than Bess would have got for herself. These are positively diamonds in the point, tiny little ones, but then they glitter beautifully."

"Let me see," said Katie. "Wouldn't that elegant little branch I wear, be as becoming to you as this, and you might lend it to me to fasten my braids. It suits braids so much better than curls."

"Does it, Katie!" laughed Nell. "Oh, you bamboozling creature; but I'm up to your games, and I'll wear it myself if I live. Your elegant little branch suits your style, you know, and I couldn't think of your giving it up on my account."

"Don't be low, Nell," said Katie, severely. "One can't make a suggestion to you, without you relapsing into slang."

Mrs. Morrison arose. "Are you going to sit in the parlor to-night, or just keep it in the order it's in, till Larry comes to-morrow?" she asked.

"Just as Bess says," said Katie, resignedly.

"I'll step up with a cup of tea to Bess, as she's not coming down," said her mother. "Stay where you are till I ask her."

In a minute or two Mrs. Morrison returned, saying that "Bess seemed someway flustered with the cold, and felt so bad with a pain in her head, that she could take no supper, not even a drop of tea."

"Well," said Katie, on hearing this, "I must say that I entirely disapprove of Bess's taking ether for neuralgia, to the extent she does; she never had neuralgia at all till lately, and I don't see that the medicine she takes improves her health."

"How does Bess know it's neuralgia that ails her?" said Uncle Terry. "If I were you, Peggy, I'd have a doctor to the girl and find out what's wearing on her, for she's not herself, no. hasn't been for weeks."

Katie looked up quickly and caught Nelly's eye. Berkely saw them exchange a glance that told of a new idea dawning in each mind.

Mrs. Morrison, without any light on the case, shook her head mournfully.

"It would be a bad day for all if anything befell Bess. Oh, uncle dear, did you think anything serious was the matter, that you spoke as you did?"

"I thought that the girl overworked herself, that's all," said Uncle Terry, shortly; "I didn't think she'd die of it, nor yet did I think it right to have her go on slaving day and night. Ellen O'Toole 'll be better than a doctor, I dare say."

"Pshaw, uncle," said Katie, pursing up her lips, "you can be very dull when you try. Larry was a very handsome fellow, and mother manœuvred to make him fancy Bess till Bess fancied he did, I suppose. It's disappointed vanity bothers her, depend upon it."

Nelly blushed, and looked displeased at her sister's bold speech, but Berkely felt every nerve in his body tingle, as her mother glowered at her with terrified wonder.

"Katie Morrison," she cried, faintly, "don't say that again; don't, if you value my life or rest. There's been but one stay for me to lean on in this weary business, and that is, Bess's being heart-whole through the whole of it. Katie, I warn you to keep your tongue between your teeth." Her voice rose excitedly, and her face expressed great emotion. "You don't know that you and yours should feel the wrong he meant to do her; and that her being unharmed is God's blessing, no mercy of Larry's, who aimed at her heart as surely as if he had had a knife in his hand!"

Trembling violently, she still kept a stern eye on her daughter, who said, deprecatingly :

"I was very foolish to speak ; I might have known that it would make a scene, and I beg Cousin Berkely's pardon for treating him to one."

Before Berkely could reply, her mother retorted :

"Since Berkely heard your hints, it is but right that he should hear them answered. I never strove to make Larry love Bess, but when he told me that she was the one thought of his life, I own it was glad news to me. I never trusted him, knowing well what a weather-cock he was ; but I did hope, for his own sake, that he would be true that once. She never breathed his name to me except in all your hearing ; I could only guess that they had pledged themselves, and you know what a blow the tidings Berkely brought us, were to me. Nothing but her calmness gave me courage to get used to it ; but I tell you now, that Larry Morrison's bride, that you're all going daft about receiving and feasting, is a woman to be pitied. A man untrue to one woman, and that one Bess Saunders, will never make another happy ; mind the words I'm telling you !"

Every one sat silent and distraught. Mrs. Morrison's words were forcibly uttered, and her usually happy face was dark and clouded. Uncle Terry turned a little book he held, over and over in his hands, with his eyes on the ceiling. Katie looked injured but gentle, and sat with folded hands, silently enduring her mother's frown.

Nelly was the only one who gave vent to any feeling, and hers was an odd emotion, for having been busy from the first, blushing and biting her lips, she at last burst into an unexplained flood of tears, and hid her face on her uncle's shoulder. Berkely said nothing ; there was nothing he could say that was better than silence. At Uncle Terry's first effort to converse on indifferent subjects, he got up, went up stairs, saying that he would like to have his cousins look at some parian figures he had bought that day for the what-not. With that excuse, he bounded up stairs, three steps at a time, till he came in front of Bess's door, and there he paused irresolute. There was not a sound audible, but

somehow Berkely felt that she was not asleep. The light shining in the hall below, made only a faint twilight where he stood. Taking a card from his pocket, he leant over the balusters for light, and wrote upon it hastily. His message covered the one side and went over on the other, and, being completed, he thrust it under the door, giving a slight rap to attract her attentio to it.

He staid in his own room some little time unpacking the orna ments he spoke of from the boxes in which they had been sent home, and pausing every moment to listen for a movement below. He heard none, however, and presently went down with his parcels.

On reaching the dining-room door, he heard hilarious laughter and merry-making, very unlike the scene he had left; entering, he found Bess to be the cause of it, and her aunt, whom he had left the image of gloom, was leading the chorus of merriment.

"Will ye look at her, Berkely," she cried; "isn't she the perfect morrow of old Molly McFadden that used to come begging to your grandfather's? Oh, then, but I'm daft to ask you if you mind her, when you were born here, and never saw the place at all; but do you know when she came in, rigged out in that way, I could have been sworn it was old Peggy."

Bess had put on the entire dress of an old crone that was to be one of the features in Uncle Terry's comic tableau, and, slipping down the back stairway, had knocked at the kitchen door, and for a moment deceived them all.

"An' us thinking her laid up with a headache, and worried enough to send off for a doctor," said her aunt. "Oh, Bess, you rogue you, but I'm glad to see it's only your capers."

"If it hadn't been for Nelly's eyes, I'd have told all your fortunes, and got my supper in payment, for which I'm really ravenous," said Bess. "Nell, you're eyes are too sharp, and I'm angry with you for it."

"No, Bess dear," said Nelly, whose eyes were red as well as sharp, for she had treated herself, apparently, to a prolonged fit of crying; "it was your light hair I saw; you forgot the wig, and the cap wasn't pulled low enough."

"Never mind," said Bess, looking directly at Katie; "I'll do it again when Larry comes. I do want to have a joke with Larry, for he appreciates fun in his very soul. You'll help me, Nell, and I'll tell him his fortune, and make him stare with wonder. But we'll choose a time when Mrs. Larry is at her friends; the dear, pretty lady would be frightened with our rough Irish tricks, and that would be too bad."

"Oh, never heed her," said Mrs. Morrison; "if she's too fine for us, she's too fine for Larry, and the sooner she gets over it the better. Bess, do you know what I'm thinking of? why, just this, that Berkely would go off laughing if he saw you and Larry dance the Shugo-shoo reel, that you went through with on Uncle Terry's birth-night, when old Dr. Dacey and the Littles' grandfather were here. Berkely, of all the dancing you ever saw, that beats it, and so you'll say if we can only persuade Bess to do it."

"I'm ready enough, aunt, if Larry isn't too grand to help me. But we'll surely frighten the bride with our jigs."

"Never fear," said her aunt, stoutly; "and I'm glad enough you're down to-night, Bess, it will be our last quiet one for awhile, and I felt lost without you."

Nelly had been mysteriously busy in the kitchen, she now entered with a tray, and triumphantly placed it before her cousin.

"Bess, did you think I could do that?" she asked. "Just look and see if you could have got a nicer tea yourself; and here comes Ellen with the pot: shall I pour it?"

"How kind you are, Nell," said Bess, gratefully. "Shall I offend you, good people, if I sit down in this trim?"

"Not a bit," said Nelly. "Pretend, Bess, that I was a Lady Bountiful and you a poor old scavenger, will you, just or fun? Come, my poor creature," she continued, in a lofty strain, "pray draw near and refresh yourself. What weary miles you must have wandered over the wind-haunted moor, ere you reached our castle gates."

"Oh, thin, may the love-light of Hivin dawn on yer swate

beautiful hid," croaked Bess, with her mouthful: "an' if it wasn't for yer angel goodness, this blissid night, that tuck me in an' saved me from starvin', wid could and hunger, it's warrum in purgatory I might be by this time, and not forninst yer ladyship's prisence."

"Isn't it a pity some manager don't pick up Nell and Bess to do low comedy?" asked Katie of Berkely, as she helped him to unwrap the statuettes.

"Oh, don't show them, Mr. Morrison, till I get done my supper," cried Bess. "I want to go into ecstacies, for I've caught sight of a Sabrina, and she is such a favorite of mine."

"Then hurry, Bess," said Katie; "don't eat heartily now, and let us all have some of your cake and jelly by-and-bye."

Obedient to this suggestion, Bess made haste and ran up stairs, to throw off her disguise. Berkely saw that she had only made a pretense of eating, and, under the plea of needing the table, he gathered up the tray and carried it out to Ellen, who received it, saying:

"Troth, she harn't stuffed hersilf this time any way."

Bess was only gone a minute or two, till she came back, eager to look at Berkely's purchase. Besides the Sabrina, there was a Ceres, with her torch; a Psyche, a Juno, and a little group of Graces. Statuary was a real delight to Bess, and her admiration was natural and enthusiastic. Berkely had a way of giving things to the house, so as to repudiate any thanks or objection.

"You're just throwing your money about like water," said his aunt, censoriously. "Berkely, I'll not suffer you to buy another ha'p'worth."

"But these are not for you, aunt; in fact, they're not for any one, but just to put in the parlor, you know; so I really don't see why you should mention it at all."

"Except to say how very, very pretty they are—that is not interdicted, Mr. Morrison," said Bess; "and I do think I shall have to take a week of critical survey to realize all their beauty."

"Don't begin now, Bess, for it's getting on in the evening,

and if we are to have a taste of your quality in jelly, we must prepare the entertainment at once."

"Yes, and do you know," said Katie, coinciding with her sister's plea for despatch, "every one looks the worse for being up late, and light-complexioned people particularly; so after our working so hard, we actually demand rest, you know, before we're presentable."

The jelly was pronounced excellent, and such an inroad made into Bess's store-room of delicacies, that she was obliged to enter a protest against the appreciation of the family.

Berkely felt singularly happy, he could not for the life of him say why, but it seemed as if some impalpable weight or dread had been raised from his spirits. He sat beside Nelly, who, for her uncle's convenience, had drawn a little, light stand over for his glass of jelly and plate of cake to rest on.

"Let us make it a little family party," said Berkely, edging in his dish; "I never saw the charm of sitting up straight in one's chair and eating uncomfortably."

"There," said Bess, despairingly, "I might as well have laid the cloth at once as have you pic-nicing round in the corners."

"What an uncomfortably clean creature you are, Bess," said Uncle Terry. "Berkely, I warn you that every crumb that drops on the carpet is a pound of lead on her heart. If iver I had been the victim of matrimony, it would have been a jewel like Katie, I'd have chosen. There she sits smiling and easy with the bits of cake dropped about her, and the nuts she spilt, reposing where they fell.

Bess cast a distracted look towards the pattern in the carpet obscured by the almonds, and seemed to calculate the instant production of a broom; but catching Berkely's sympathizing eye, she laughed.

"Well, I suppose I am uncomfortable, uncle," she said "but just to show you that I can mortify myself, here I'll sit without even a glance at the carpet."

Mrs. Morrison brought over her chair to Berkely's side.

"Somehow I'm puzzled to know what kind of young lady Larry's wife will be," she said. "We'll see her soon enough; but Berkely, dear, if you can give me an idea of what sort of lady we have to expect, it'll be a relief to me."

Berkely glanced anxiously over at Bess, who came and leaned on her aunt's shoulder.

"She's very beautiful to begin with, is she not, Mr. Morrison?" she asked.

"Very," said Berkely, and then he stopped hesitatingly. "It is so difficult to do justice to a young lady who was presented to me as the only member of her husband's family she had ever seen. She could not have looked prettier or appeared more gracefully embarrassed. I scarcely remember anything she said except her anxiety about you, aunt."

"How anxiety about me?" repeated Mrs. Morrison. "Indeed, then, I see no reason why she should have been troubled for me."

"Then it is because you don't wish to see, aunt," said Bess, severely. "Poor girl, it is very natural that she should be most interested in the person who should henceforward be so near a connection. Her husband's mother, of course, will be the one she will be most desirons to please, and I heartily pity Larry's bride, in having such a flinty-hearted mother-in-law."

Mrs. Morrison laughed good-humoredly.

"O, then, if you take up cudgels for her, she'll need nc other friend, Bess," said she. "Katie," she added, significantly, "may be you had better go up to your bed, while the rest of us sets things to rights. What with your bothering yourself about things no one but yourself could see, and worrying one way and another, you must be tired."

Nell laughed boisterously.

"Take that as a reminder, Katie," she said. "You stirred mother up a little while ago, and she's giving you a tap of her claw now."

Katie frowned on her reprovingly, and took up her plate and glass.

"I'll put away my share of the feast, Bess, and to startle

my amiable sister, I'll actually brush up the crumbs;" which she proceeded to do.

"Had we not better make out a route of the procession that will meet the strangers to-morrow?" asked Bess of Katie, as she opened the door. "You know we may possibly get entangled. Nell, what do you propose?"

"I suggest that mother, in black silk and a new blond cap, should lead off with Uncle Terry in black broadcloth; that they should fall upon Larry's neck and bless him, etc., etc, whilst you and Katie and I form ourselves into a graceful group around Mrs. Larry, and do the complimentary."

"And I," asked Berkely, in distress, "is there no part for me to perform—holding the hats, or handkerchiefs, or opening doors?"

"Don't be impatient; for I intend you to make a sensation on your own account. Listen: the tearful scene on the one side, and the charming embarrassment on the other, having somewhat subsided, I clap my hands in the most natural manner, exclaiming, 'Oh, Cousin Berkely! we have forgotten Cousin Berkely.' I run to the door at which you appear, just having heard the arrival. Then follow renewal of compliments, renewal of smiles, blushes, etc., and behold us all in chosen attitudes, till the tea-bell rings."

"I'll leave you thus," said Bess, yawning, "for I'm actually tired to death, as Katie says."

Berkely took up the figures.

"Let us put these in the parlor before you go," he said.

Bess took up the Graces, and begged Nelly to bring a light.

"Wait a moment, and I'll get Ellen's candle," she cried, running into the kitchen; while Bess and Berkely waited in the hall.

Mr. Morrison closed the door on them, and being alone, they looked at each other for the first time since Bess had come down. The effort she had been making died out of her face, it became distressed and anxious as it had been when he found her in the parlor with the broker

"I must trouble you again to-morrow, Mr. Morrison," she said; "I am very much worried about that business, and I need your advice."

"I am very glad that you will let me serve you."

"Let you," she repeated in a trembling voice. "Oh, Berkely Morrison, you have read my heart and helped me keep its secret, for which I shall love and honor you to my life's end."

"Now, then, here's this candle of Ellen's," said Nelly, reappearing; "but we'll have to light gas, for this is a mere glimmer."

CHAPTER XII

WEDDED BLISS.

The Morrisons were having an early dinner in a promiscuous sort of way on the looked for Tuesday. Berkely, seeing at breakfast signs of a morning of flutter and preparation—some of the family being so engaged giving the last touches to the parlor, that they swallowed their coffee standing, and sped away to the work—volunteered to dine at a hotel in company with Uncle Terry. So it came to pass that a cup of tea was drawn, and such dainties as cold ham and biscuit were ranged on a leaf of the kitchen table as a substitute for that usually plentiful meal. Katie, Nellie, and their mother swallowed hasty mouthfuls, wondering meantime if the train would be late or early, and surmising about the bride's dress, manner, voice, etc., with as much interest as if the subject had been broached for the first time.

"Ellen," said Mrs. Morrison, when the young ladies had suddenly remembered the time, and darted up to do their hair, "keep the tea-pot on the hearth for Miss Bess, she's putting fresh ribbons on the toilet in the young people's room, and will want a cup before she goes up to dress."

"Troth, thin, but I would wid joy and pleasure," returned Ellen, heartily, "but what would be the good of my saving what she won't take; she has no taste in life for aiting, tho' I do be striving to get her to swally a mouthful?"

Bess opened the kitchen door as she spoke:

"There's a carriage turning into the Place," she cried. "Run, aunt, and get your dress on, for I'm sure it's Larry."

With a distracted cry, Mrs. Morrison took to her heels and Bess followed her; they had scarcely reached the landing when the door-bell rang loudly, and a chorus of little screams issued from the young ladies leaning over the balusters.

"They're come, mother, they're come!" they cried. "Isn't it terrible? Oh, Bess, you must go down—send Ellen, do, or they'll think we're dead."

Bess gave a look at her calico wrapper and Holland apron, then glanced up at the morning gowns fluttering above, and doggedly said:

"I will not go down until I am dressed."

"Not go?" screamed Katie, as another loud ring woke echoes in the hall.

"Ellen," said Bess, descending as that damsel appeared, "show the lady and gentleman into the parlor, and say the family are dressing; that they did not look for them till the next train, but will be down presently."

With a motion to Ellen to stay her hand till she should be out of sight, Bess fled up again to meet a host of indignant whispers from the injured girls above.

"What will they think?" said Nelly.

"And why need you care, Bess, about your appearance?" said Katie. "I never imagined you were so selfish."

Without a syllable in reply, Bess, as white as death, and trembling in every limb, stood an instant, her lips apart and her eyes strained, listening. It was Larry's voice in the hall below, clear, rich and musical, full of a joyous warmth that was like a breath of summer.

"Where are they? where are they?" he cried. "I must see

them all at once ; it's not their dresses, but their faces, God bless them, that I want to see !"

The parlor door was flung open, and a sweet, girlish tone said, "Pray, don't leave me ;" but his bounding foot on the stair was his only answer.

Like lightning Bess darted into her room and closed the door but Mrs. Morrison ran forward and threw herself, crying, "Larry my own darling Larry," on the bosom of her only son.

It never took Bess Saunders long to dress, but she was more than usually expeditious to-day ; ten minutes after she had entered her room, she left it again, evidently in complete toilet and looking very handsome. She ran swiftly down the stairs and opened the parlor door ; at the center-table stood a little slender figure, exquisitely dressed, that turned at the sound and showed her the face of Larry's wife.

A beautiful face, very young and full of hope and happiness ; soft blue eyes, auburn hair, dressed in ringlets like a girl's, and a rose-bud of a mouth that was as innocent as a baby's.

"Is it Kate or Nelly ?" she asked, timidly, but came forward with outstretched hands.

"I am Mr. Morrison's cousin, Bess Saunders. Katie and Nelly will be down in a moment."

"His cousin ! O, yes, he told me as we came up in the carriage, that his cousin was staying here. I'm very glad to see you, Miss Saunders."

"Staying here," thought Bess ; but she said aloud, "I am very happy to meet you," and took her hands and kissed her kindly. Bess was a tall woman, and her height, for a moment, seemed to over-awe the little bride ; she glanced at the door nervously, and then at Bess, and finally on the carpet pattern at her feet.

"My aunt will be down in a little while," pursued Bess, and she explained the mistake they had made in the hour of their arrival.

Mrs. Larry looked confused, and seemed most anxious for the presence of her lord, although Bess strove hard to make her manner gentle and re-assuring.

A foot-step in the hall, and the door opened ; both turned

anxiously towards it, and Berkely entered. Mrs. Larry sprang up. "Oh, I'm so glad to see you, Mr. Morrison," she cried, and ran to him joyfully. He had scarcely time to reply before the room was full. Larry came leading in his mother, and his sisters followed close in his wake. Mrs. Morrison, tearful and trembling, received her new daughter-in-law's embrace, and the young ladies, in their turn, pressed forward and kissed her. Then came Uncle Terry, full of pleasant compliments to the bride, and rallied Larry on his sly courtship, and congratulated him on its results.

Laughing gaily under his uncle's badinage, Larry, holding his wife's little hand in his, turned around and suddenly faced Bess Saunders. She stood beside his Cousin Berkely, and looked bright and animated as she spoke to him.

"You were over-looking me, Cousin Larry," she said, quietly smiling.

Lawrence Morrison was a handsome man, so very handsome that it would be impossible to look at him casually, or avoid being prejudiced in his favor; but suddenly he seemed to lose his manly figure, his noble style and brilliant expression, and to shrink to a humbled, detected sneak. The change was only of an instant's duration; it passed as swiftly as it came; his color returned and his laugh with it.

"Why, Cousin Bess, forgive me!" he cried, a little boisterously; "I must have been blind indeed, to have over-looked 'stately queen Bess,' as Nell and I used to call you when you got miffed at us. Juliet, this is my cousin; ah, you have been introduced; I'm glad of it; and you're sure to be friends."

He rattled on gaily, but somehow he did not look directly at Bess, and, when his sisters conducted his wife to her room to lay aside her traveling dress, he took refuge between Berkely and Uncle Terry, and got himself immersed in a discussion on the superior business facilities of New York to his own city

Mrs. Morrison turned to Bess. "She's a pretty little creature," she said, "and very amiable."

Bess assented heartily

"And Larry," said his mother, looking at him fondly, "he

looks happy and well. You were right, as you always are, in saying that marriage would improve him. He's a gay, thoughtless lad, and the cares of life will sober him."

"Are you talking of me, mother?" cried Larry, catching her eye; "then say something merciful, for I need mercy always."

"Then, indeed, Larry, you would have got little of that same for your underhand dealings, if it hadn't been for Bess here. We were all up in arms against you, but she conquered every objection, and I'm telling her she was in the right, for you have brought us home a dear, sweet little lady, that no one could find fault with."

Bess looked composedly at her cousin; her face grew a shade whiter, perhaps, but nothing more. Larry preferred meeting his mother's glance to her's.

"I'm heartily obliged to Bess," he said, gaily. "And so you like Juliet, mother? she'll be glad to know it, for, to tell you the truth, if you'd all been Feejees or Otaheitians, she couldn't have been more alarmed at encountering you."

"And for what, Larry?" asked his mother, slightly flushed at the terms. "Isn't it us that should feel strange as well as her?"

"Oh," said Larry, laughing lightly, "you know I told her you were all old fashioned Irish folk, and, beyond its geographical position, Ireland and she are utter strangers. She may have seen a farce with an Irish hero, perhaps, and expected to find you all flourishing shelalahs, and shouting bedad and bejabers!"

His mother looked sternly on her merry son.

"Didn't she know that you were born there yourself?" she asked.

"Why I really don't know that I remember it myself," he returned, slightingly; "and I don't think I ever mentioned it to her."

"Well, then, Larry Morrison," said his incensed mother, "much as I love you, I never felt too much trust in you; and if you begin by being ashamed of your native land, I fear it may sometime have cause to blush for you. As for thinking myself a heathen because I was born among my forefathers, Heaven desart me when I blush for the same!"

"Aunt," said Bess, earnestly, "pray don't be unreasonable. Larry thought he was amusing you. No one can admire your love of country more than he; it was mere thoughtlessness. Say it was, Larry."

The door opened, and his wife and sisters returned. She was a mass of pearl-colored silk, point lace and delicate ribbons, and certainly looked exquisitely pretty in her finery. Bess left her aunt's side and went over to Larry's sofa. "Go to your mother," she said to him, in an under tone, which he instantly obeyed, leaving his seat at Uncle Terry's side vacant for his wife. Berkely rose and begged her to be seated, and the sisters, according to Nelly's programme of the night before, fell into favorite attitudes around her. Berkely made the conversation general, and Larry, after a few soothing whispers to his mother, drew her into it with him, and made it hilarious.

Juliet's innocent ideas of housekeeping, her impracticable plans and childlike tastes, all transpired in the pleasant confidence that cheerful converse inspires. Uncle Terry, who had apparently won the young wife's heart, gave absurd advice as a new incentive to merriment, and Mrs. Morrison, every shadow of vexation gone, was the gayest of the gay.

"But I know I shall make an admirable housewife, Lawrence," cried Juliet, "for I mean to beg one of your sisters to come and stay with me and teach me for a while; they are perfectly inimitable, I know."

"You may well say that," said Uncle Terry; "they're models in their way."

"Yes, and I can easily learn; papa was so fond of music, that I have practised late and early, and with that and my other studies, have had no time for domestic details, but I really long to begin. I went over our house with papa and Aunt Edmonds and Lawrence yesterday, and almost fancied myself its mistress, full of business and jingling keys already."

"But, Juliet," said Nell, frankly, "don't imagine Katie or I know anything sensible about a house. At least I, for one, confess that my only definite idea of housewifery, is that I had better let things alone, or I'll make a mess of it."

The great blue eyes opened wide in wonder.

"Your mother, then," she suggested—but Mrs. Morrison hastened to say:

"Well, my dear, I'm not saying what I was in my day, but I have no need to take thought or trouble now, it's all spared me by my third daughter here, who is a head and hands to us all." And she laid her arm fondly round Bessie's shoulder.

"Does Miss Saunders live here?" asked Juliet, in an innocent, surprised way. "I thought—that is, I understood she was a visitor. Or was it a mistake of mine, Lawrence?"

Bess caught the look he gave the little childish face turned towards him, and from that moment a new feeling dawned in her heart for Larry Morrison's wife—a faint presentiment of something to come struck her like an evil wind.

The look, whatever it expressed to Bess of anger, impatience, or a lurking harshness of nature, was inexplicable to his wife, who answered it with one of blank astonishment, at which he presently laughed.

"You'll understand our family arrangements by-and-bye, Juliet; they're not very intricate, but I dare say I have not been clear in my explanation," he said; and catching sight of the new pictures Berkely had added to the parlor walls, fell to admiring them greatly.

"Your taste, are they not, Bess?" he asked; "they look like some I saw you admiring once in the Academy. Juliet, your Uncle Edmonds has an engraving of this one to the right."

"Mr. Morrison bought those," said Bess; "but I do admire them very much, and had often looked at them, never dreaming we should have the pleasure of seeing them daily."

"I took them on that recommendation," said Berkely, simply. "I am lamentably ignorant in art, which I attribute chiefly to being obliged to look so long at Chinese painting. I should never have dared to take anything on the warrant of my own eye; but I saw Miss Saunders looking at these."

Katie and Nelly exchanged glances.

"Really, Bess," said Nell, "for a less agreeable speech than

that I would do an indefinite amount of curtsying and blushing. You're an insensible clod."

"Not at all," said Bess, looking at Berkely with a bright glow upon her face. "I'm truly happy to have gained the sight of such favorites, and Mr. Morrison's kind opinion too."

"Berkely," asked Larry, suddenly, "do you live here?"

"What a question, Larry," interposed Nelly. "Don't you think we'd be a deserted set if he hadn't taken pity on us?"

"So," said Larry, "you've fallen into my place, and are the ostensible head of the house."

"You know you made over your room to me when we parted in New York, conditional only on gaining the family consent; they couldn't well refuse me, when I backed my own entreaties by your desire."

Berkely looked quietly at his cousin to see if he would feign surprise or forgetfulness, as his tone denoted; but he said nothing in reply, only smiled and showed his exquisitely handsome teeth, and then looked over at Bess.

Katie and Nelly showed a laudable desire in their dress to compete with the brilliance of the bride, and had really made themselves look lovely.

Uncle Terry glanced around admiringly.

"Larry," he whispered, "look at them, they make a picture; I never saw three prettier faces in all my life."

Larry looked up, but his eye did not rest on the group. Bess was standing at the window; she had been about to leave the room, and was stopped by Berkely, to whom she was now speaking.

"She is handsomer than all three put together," said Larry, coolly. "She has real beauty, the rest is all light and coloring, blushing and smiling, and becoming ribbons."

"It's a wonder you never saw Bess's beauty sooner," said the old man, looking at him keenly.

"I don't remember the time when I didn't think her the finest looking woman I ever saw," said his nephew, carelessly returning his glance.

"Well, you've shown a wonderful forethought, considering the

race you sprung from, Larry, for I hear that Love and Fortune made a pair, and drew you to the altar in grand style. Well, well," laughed the old man, softly, "you'll be a great man yet, for the saying used to be, that all the Morrisons wanted to make a figure in the world, was a little thrift and a lookout for themselves."

His nephew showed no relish for the old man's compliments, but without much ceremony, rose and joined Bess and Berkely, who were settling some discussion in a low tone.

"Then I will arrange a place for it, and be ready when you bring it down," said Bess, in conclusion; and, without glancing at Larry, left the room.

Berkely stopped a moment, looking at Larry as if waiting for him to speak before he followed her.

"As much a housewife as ever, is she not?" he asked, "and you are favorite aid-de-camp, I suppose."

Berkely smiled. "Miss Saunders is too independent to have any aids; but she's a devoted housekeeper, as you say."

He hurried off as he spoke, and Larry, hearing by his step on the stairs, that he had not followed Bess, turned to his wife, who had added Mrs. Morrison and Uncle Terry to the charmed circle that surrounded her.

"Juliet, I'm going to see Jenny Brackett, an ancient enemy of mine," he said. "Uncle Terry can give you an idea of the passages at arms we used to have. I believe I bequeathed my antipathy to you, uncle, when I left."

"Faith, then," said the old gentleman, "I had wrath enough of my own without borrowing. She's just the thorn in my flesh that purifies me by the fire of aggravation daily."

Larry glanced along the hall towards the dining-room after he had left the parlor; the door was open, and he caught the flutter of Bess's purple dress within. Hearing his step, she looked up in blank surprise from a little table where she was arranging some flowers.

"Am I so great a stranger that I intrude now, where I used to be so thoroughly at home?"

Still she gave him no answer, only as she looked at him; pride

and coldness became mixed with her astonishment. Lawrence Morrison was not a man easily abashed, but he turned irresolute, and heartily wished he had been less adventurous in his old home. Berkely's entrance relieved him of his embarrassment. He carried a pyramid of natural flowers—japonicas and orange blossoms, heliotropes, fuschias and geraniums—a perfect galaxy of floral gems.

"O these are perfectly exquisite," cried Bess, turning an entirely different face upon the gentlemen, and giving Larry, who was quick at reading faces, a key to her behavior to him.

"She will be civil to me in the presence of any one," he thought; "the look was to warn me that I must not see her alone." And as soon as he had come to this conclusion, his brow cleared. "She has not conquered the old feeling," and he laughed in his heart; a vain and evil heart it was.

"You were to know nothing about this," said Bess, laughing; "it was a delicate recognition of your wedded bliss, and was to burst upon you from the centre of the table, when the tea-bell rung. But if people won't allow themselves to be surprised, then people must take the consequence."

"People, that is I, shall enjoy seeing you arrange these lovely flowers," said Larry, in the friendliest tone; "and Juliet, for whom the compliment is best suited, will be delightfully surprised. We are both of us very grateful to the taste that suggested it," he added, bowing towards Bess.

"It was Mr. Morrison's idea," she returned, quietly, as she fastened some myrtle sprays so as to give them the appearance of falling from the tall vase, around which she was twining wreaths of roses and heliotropes. "Did he not select them tastefully? yet he tells me he had almost forgotten their names," she added.

She was so intent on her work, that Larry found himself at a disadvantage; so he forgot entirely his idea of stirring up Jenny, and wandered back into the parlor, where the ladies were getting on famously.

Lounging on the sofa, he called Uncle Terry to his aid to kill time till the tea-bell rang, which it presently did. Springing up,

he gave his mother his arm, and Berkely, who had just come into the parlor, led out Mrs. Larry, and the girls took possession of Uncle Terry. Bess, in the dining-room, stood like the goddess of welcome, glowing and smiling above a very unfashionably well-spread board. Mrs. Morrison's notion of a tea combined an assortment of delicacies, ornamental and substantial, that no doubt astonished her elegant daughter-in-law. The board groaned under the dishes, yet everything was tastefully disposed, and looked temptingly nice.

"This is my old seat," cried Larry, impulsively; "I'll take it while I stay, and you can put Juliet where you will."

"That's Berkely's place, Larry," said Nell; "Bess has given you these seats at mother's right hand."

"I shall keep this one, even if I risk disarranging Bess's immaculate plans. By Jove! I shall think, by-and-by, that I've sold my birth-right to Berkely; he has my old room, my old privileges, my old seat, my old friends,"—he glanced covertly at Bess—"and if I have kept my own name it is all I can hope to do."

"You've parted with a portion of it yourself," said Berkely, laughing; "to Mrs. Morrison, I mean," he added.

It fell out thus, that the evening they had planned as so very pleasant, had some mal-apropos turns in it, and when they adjourned from the tea-table to the parlor, the girls ardently longed for the Daceys to drop in, as they had promised. Bess did her utmost to draw the bride into conversation, but signally failed; there was something impassable between them, a barrier that Juliet seemed timidly conscious of, and shrunk away from.

Berkely came to the rescue in a happy stroke that set them all at ease.

"Mrs. Morrison, you remember your promise to me in New York?" he said. "May I ask you to fulfill it here? Aunt, you will be charmed, I know, for you like music so much. Shall I open the piano?"

Mrs. Larry smiled and blushed; it was her one accomplishment, and she was nothing loathe to impress her new family fa-

vorably, while they, on their part, were delighted to be entertained.

"I can sing ballads, if you prefer them," she said, turning to her mother-in-law, as Berkely led her to the piano.

"Can you, then?" said Mrs. Morrison, eagerly. "It's many a day since I heard a good song, for I would never call the screeching and la-lalling that our girls do, by the name. Have you got a Scotch song? Do you know the 'Braes of Balquither,' or 'The Bush above Traquaie?"

"Yes; you can ask me for any Scotch song in Furgueson's collection; I know them all," returned Juliet, delightedly.

"Juliet, begin with Moore; I like him best," said Larry, stretching out his length on the sofa, near his mother. His wife glanced at him, and, striking a few chords, began the accompaniment of "Love's Young Dream."

"Ah, the days are gone when beauty bright
My heart's chain wove;
When my dream of life, from morn till night,
Was love, still love."

Sang Larry's young bride, and looked with timid fondness over her shoulder at her lord, who lay with his mother's hand in his, looking as innocently happy as a child.

But it was to be a gay evening after all; in the midst of Juliet's second song, the door-bell began to ring, and the Daceys were announced; then followed the Littles, Miss Parker and her cousin, Mr. Harrington, and, before the introductions were concluded, Mr. and Mrs. Lindley were added to the party.

The ladies were dressed in the most elegant costume in honor of the bride, and, without much persuasion, laid aside their bonnets for the evening. Music was again resorted to, and this time Mrs. Larry gave them Sonatas, songs without words, and gems from Beethoven and Meyerbeer; then Mrs. Lindley and Carrie Little sang duets, and Katie played for Adah Parker and Nelly to do a scene from the Barber of Seville, which was pronounced a capital imitation of two favorite opera singers, and greatly applauded by all.

Meantime, Bess and Dr. Dacey fell quietly into their usual corner talk, and Larry renewed the charm he had always swayed over his mother's house.

Bess cared but little for flowers or music, those two elements of womanly loveliness of mind. She thought them pretty and pleasant, but to long for them, or revel in them, never entered her brain. Dr. Dacey's conversation was a luxury to her, that would have been as inexplicable to others, as a passion for insensible objects was to her. To sit near him, following his quick, spare-worded explanations of some grand chemical truth; to be the confident of his experiments, the admirer of his discoveries, was all a pleasure so pure as to cancel some of the stings that made her set a watch upon her heart lest the world might see its writhings. The measure of the music changed, and suddenly she saw the bride whirl by her in a waltz with Mr. Harrington ; Larry followed with Adah Parker, and then came Nelly and Miss Little, making that most deplorable spectacle of two ladies waltzing together.

Dr. Dacey glanced round and sighed.

"Ah ! well, there's an end to our talking, Miss Saunders," he said ; "the signs of the times foretell that you will quietly slip away, and presently the house will be fragrant with the odor of coffee."

"You are wrong in one thing, doctor," said Bess, smiling ; "you shall not smell coffee to-night. Wines and weddings are inseparable, and you shall have some fine port that Mr. Berkely Morrison vouches for."

Where the highly respectable colored person came from, or afterwards disappeared to, who, in process of time, brought in a tray of delicacies and gravely waited on the company, was a secret of Bess's own ; but such a person did appear, to the profound astonishment of Mrs. Morrison, and even the momentary distraction of her imperturbable son, who always considered th sacrifices of others a matter of course.

"Mother," he said in an undertone, as he brought over his wine glass to her sofa, "Bess has increased the establishment, I see ; how did you conquer her ideas of economy ?"

"Yes; and I was struck dumb when I saw the black," returned his mother in a whisper; "but how he came's a mystery to me, for she never named him."

"There's a woman in the kitchen, too," resumed Larry, in a careless tone, but he watched his mother's face as if he had some interest in her reply.

"That's Ellen O'Toole; she's been working for us at odd times till last week, and then Bess agreed with her to come and stay the winter through. Bess looks well enough, but she's been ailing with some disease of the nerves this long while. Ever since your Cousin Berkely came home, in fact."

Larry's eyes fastened themselves on Bess's face as she stood opposite him, talking to his wife, but he could read no confirmation of his mother's words there.

"Was her illness sudden?" he asked at last.

"Yes," said his mother—"I cannot say it did come on her quickly, but I think she took cold, for she was up late and bothered about getting your old room ready for Berkely."

Larry said nothing, but he thought "That was the night she read the letter—the little cheat to play off on me, that she forgets it all, and thinks I cannot see through her."

The day that began so unpropitiously, ended in great merriment; there are few women who are not satisfied with the society that elects them its belle, and as Mrs. Larry Morrison discovered in the devotedly admiring looks of the gentlemen, and the yielding agreeableness of the ladies, that she was acknowledged supremely pretty, she was in high good humor with them all. It was a trophy of family success that Larry should have secured so lovely a wife; so the girls were delighted too. Uncle Terry really loved young people, and had a solid enjoyment in looking on at their gayety that he would never have confessed. Mrs. Morrison, to use her own phrase, was too glad "that things were as they were," to complain, so all were genially gay, as the "good-nights" were said.

"And now, as Juliet must be thoroughly tired, let us say good-night too," said Katie, taking her hand; Mrs. Larry rose and her husband followed her.

"Don't trouble the girls," he said, I'll show you the way.'

The pretty little face dutifully held itself up to Mrs. Morrison for a maternal kiss.

"Good-night to you, dear," she said, and put her lips to her cheek—but Mrs. Morrison sighed after she did it, and gave an unconscious glance towards Bess.

"Well," said Nell, after they had gone, sitting down with an evident intention to review, "what do you all think of Miss Waters that was, Mrs. Morrison that is?"

"She's pretty and stylish," said Kate, critically, "but her music is really nothing, to have been made the study of a life."

"You say that, Katie, because Mr. Little went into raptures over her expression, and said that pretty thing about those tiny fingers rendering the ponderous old masters so grandly. She plays well, you know she does, and as far as being lovely and ornamental is concerned, has no fault that I can see."

"Nelly, something has demented you; I can't tell what you mean, dashing at conclusions, and giving people motives. I merely spoke of Juliet's music from my own idea of the science; I know what playing is, and I know nothing of any nonsense Mr. Little may be pleased to deliver himself of."

"There's too many ribbons about her," said Mrs. Morrison at length, with a deep sigh. "What would the like of that French doll do in sickness or trouble? Larry should have bespoke his sunshine for life, when he married a butterfly."

"That's not fair," said Bess, rising. "Why should you expect a gentle, lovely young creature to exhibit strength of endurance or determination at an evening party, when every characteristic except those she displayed would have been very much out of taste? I never saw such perversity; if she had been any other than she was, you could have seen her faults, and not been obliged to imagine them for her."

Berkely hastened to say good-night as things reached this pass, and he had scarcely entered the hall when Bess opened the door, and came out, not to go up stairs, however, for she

went into the dining-room and called Ellen to give orders for the breakfast.

When Berkely opened his door, he found his room so warm that he left it standing wide. Jenny Bracket had evidently visited his stove, and prepared it to withstand a Polar night; so lowering his window to make a draught, he walked up and down with his hands in his pockets, stopping once as he heard his cousins come up stairs.

They waited an instant to say good-night, as they saw his door open, and to join him in eulogizing Jenny's sagacity in making his room an oven, and then went into their chamber.

Mrs. Morrison's leisurely tread ascended next, and by-and-bye he heard Larry open his door, and coming out into the hall, say to his wife:

"I'll take my cigar into the dining-room and finish it."

Berkely had a reason of his own for seeing Larry, so he thought, "This is my time,"—for what he had to say would not keep.

Down he came, softly, because he did not care to disturb the family, and so gained the hall without a sound. In the parlor the lights were still burning brightly, and through the door ajar he saw Larry in a rich cashmere gown, standing in the centre of the room, while Bess, with the piano cover in her hand, stood before him. She had evidently been arranging its tumbled folds, when his presence had startled her; and when Berkely saw them, he was speaking:

"Why in the name of sense do you act thus to me, Bess?" he said; "give me an opportunity of explaining to you all that seems strange now, and I am sure that this absurd misunderstanding will melt away like smoke."

She did not speak—but very white and distressed looking, waved him away with her trembling hand.

Berkely had stood an instant irresolute as to whether to go up or make his presence known.

Bess saw and relieved him of his perplexity.

"Mr. Morrison," she said, speaking for the first time, "pray come in."

Berkely hesitated a moment, feeling strangely confused; but her look of entreaty determined him and he obeyed.

Larry turned round angrily, and holding his cigar between his finger and thumb, viewed him from head to foot with suspicious impudence.

"You have a light foot, sir," he said at last.

"I came down hearing you leave your room, because I wished to speak to you, Larry," said Berkely, reddening with annoyance under the look. "I tell you on my honor that I had no idea of Miss Saunders being here."

"Mr. Morrison," said Bess, interrupting him, "I am glad you are here. Will you do me the favor to hear what I must say to your cousin?" She stopped, and made the effort of swallowing once or twice, as if something choked her. Larry, now whiter than she was, turned angrily on Berkely.

"I positively object to Mr. Morrison's in any wise interfering in my affairs," he said: "if he is a gentleman, he will leave the room."

Bess stepped round and set her back against the door. Her eyes absolutely glared, fierce and black, in her ghastly face.

"Do not move, either of you," she said, hoarsely; "and you, Larry Morrison, mark my words. For the sake of your mother, I bear the indignity of your presence in this house; for her sake I've endured a torture that, if it were in Heaven's service, I should call it martyrdom; but for the sake of no one under heaven, shall I suffer the insult of your approaching me in confidence, or in anywise referring to the past—that is over and dead. This man"—she indicated Berkely with her outstretched hand—"saw its ghost, but no one else ever knew from me that it had existed"—— He interrupted her.

"You chose a fitting confident," he said, jeeringly; but handsome as his face was, it looked wickedly ugly in his anger. "What was that little group I heard you praise to-night, Bacchus, consoling Ariadne, was it not?" He laughed,

and shook the ashes from his cigar. "You always had a classical taste you know."

Berkely sprang forward with an upraised arm.

"Speak another word in that tone, Lawrence Morrison," he said, trembling with indignation, "and I'll knock you down at her feet to beg her pardon."

Larry stepped back, and Bess suddenly controlled herself.

"This is all folly," she said, quietly. "I have no right to bring you into this petty business, Mr. Morrison, but it is necessary that your cousin should understand me. I have asked him to remember the one point on which I will be obeyed; that is all I have to say to him. Gentlemen"—she looked from one to the other, a gentle, dignified, beautiful woman, with all passion and excitement gone from her face—"I wish you good-night."

She went out, and Berkely stood where she had left him, waiting to hear what answer Larry might vouchsafe to his threat.

He was walking coolly up and down the room, but after a few turns he paused, and looking at Berkely with slightly upraised brows, laughed good-humoredly, and held out his hand. Berkely looked at him in return, but did not take it.

"Come, come, Berkely, don't let us be fools; don't you see I'm a little sore about my old fancy? Bess and I were lovers once, but interest—duty—regard for my family."—he jerked off these excuses with a toss of his head and a shrug of his shoulders, and added, resignedly: "Whatever is, is right; but I wanted to be friends with Bess, and felt cut at your supremacy."

Berkely tried to speak, but astonishment, anger, and contempt choked him; he looked at the man standing before him, handsome as some perfect piece of art, with a candid, manly face, in every outward semblance, his superior; but, to his eye, without a shade of truth or honor in his soul, and he loathed him in his inmost heart.

It would have been impossible for him to have dissembled;

all that he could hope to do was to keep quiet, and he did that for the sake of the house he had made his home.

"You are master of your own conduct and feelings, Larry," he said. "I have neither the power nor desire to be your judge, but I shall be glad to know that you regard Miss Saunders' entreaty without further trouble. She seems to me to have earned the right to be obeyed."

Larry puffed his cigar and laughed.

"Why should I wish to talk to a woman who makes herself disagreeable to me?" he asked, frankly; "particularly when I have a pretty young wife of my own, who is all smiles." Saying this, he put his cigar in his mouth and his hands in his pockets, and strode up and down the parlor, with an air of easy comfort.

Berkely, with his eyes on the ground, went out, and slowly and quietly went off to bed.

CHAPTER XIII.

BERKELY DOES SOME BUSINESS IN JEWELRY.

THE next day was a bright and pleasant one; with all the snow gone from the streets and a strong sunlight warming them: it was charming weather for December. At breakfast, Berkely proposed a drive for the ladies, and, Nelly and Katie joyfully assenting, it was arranged that Mrs. Larry and they should accompany him in a barouche, while Larry rode on horseback at their side. Bess plead household cares as an excuse for remaining at home, and Mrs. Morrison's head ached so with the "capering," as she termed the dancing of the night before, that she declared it was as much as she could do to get over it in time to go out for tea.

Three o'clock was the hour named for dinner, and as it neared that time, the wheels of a carriage sounded in the street and the door-bell rang.

"It is the ladies comin' home, Miss Bess, called Jenny up the stairs, as a warning to her mistress before she opened the door. But Jenny was mistaken; to be sure there was a carriage there with an open door, beside which a portly coachman stood in waiting, but the two persons on the step Jenny had never seen before. They were a lady and gentleman of a merry, genial appearance, and they nodded good-humoredly at Jenny as they made the enquiry:

"Is this Mrs. Morrison's?"

"Yes; but they're a-going out by-and-bye," said Jenny, upon whose mind no effort of her mistress could impress the correct demeanor to strangers; but suddenly recollecting herself, she added—"Jest you come in, and I'll ask Miss Bess."

"Come in, Joe," said the lady encouragingly to the gentleman, who was evidently of a bashful disposition, and stood twirling his hat and smiling at the door mat. She was a short, bright-eyed, dark-complexioned woman, with no particular beauty of feature, but a clear, good-humored expression, and a short, merry laugh that rang like a bell. Her companion, directly her opposite in height and complexion, was still like her in that indefinable something that marks relationship in the most dissimilar faces. She was the elder by some years, and might have been old-maidish but for the determined gayety of her dress and manner.

"It is the younger Mrs. Morrison we wish to see particularly," said she to Jenny; "but please present our compliments to the whole family," and she handed her two cards, on which were written, "Miss Charlotte Waters," and "Joseph Waters."

"Oh," said Jenny, staring hard at the visitors, "Mr. Larry's gone out in a carriage with his wife and the young ladies, and you'll have to see Mrs. Morrison 'cause there ain't no one else in 'cept her and Miss Bess."

"They are out, Joe; you remember that I told you they would be out, when you insisted on coming at this late hour. I don't blame you, but all I ask is that you'll acknowledge that I was right. We'll see the other ladies, please," she added to Jenny.

"See, aunt!" said Bess, taking the cards she received from the girl's hand into her aunt's room, and placing them before her, "here are the Waters to call; will you go down at once?"

Her aunt looked hopelessly round her, and then in a complaining manner, began:

"I wish that Larry would stay at home, and look to his own folk. How am I to make myself agreeable to people I never laid my eyes on, nor one belonging to them?"

"It is Miss Charlotte Waters and her brother," said Bess, without appearing to heed her aunt's demur. "Juliet said they were the best and kindest people living, when she mentioned them last night, and I know you cannot fail to be pleased with each other."

"Well, come you with me, and I'll go down," said Mrs. Morrison, decidedly, and Bess immediately consented to prevent Jenny Brackett's further interest in the conversation, for she had been standing open-mouthed in her attention, under the pretence of waiting for a message.

Bess took upon herself the ceremony of mutual introduction, and strove to make up by her cordial warmth for the somewhat stately bearing her aunt, out of remembrance of Larry's last night's complimentary mention of her nationality, had thought proper to assume. It was the intention of the Waters, in calling, to insist on all the family joining them at tea that evening, and Miss Charlotte urged them so heartily, that Mrs. Morrison, who was very susceptible of warmth, began to melt and become confidential.

"You see, Miss Waters," she said, "I am a great lover of home, and it's seldom I'd leave it from my own choice, but since you're so friendly as to desire it, I'll go over with Larry and his wife this evening."

"And the young ladies too, remember; we'll have no compromise, you must all come; must they not, Joe?"

"Decidedly," said Joe, and he looked amiably from one to the other, but he blushed a little, notwithstanding Bess's efforts to set him at ease, and evinced occasionally all those phenomena belonging to shy men. His sister, on the contrary, was full of con-

versation on every variety of subject, and had not half exhausted the one theme of the surprise occasioned by the tidings of Juliet's wedding.

"My brother, John Waters, of New York, is the eldest of the family, you see," she said, renewing the subject in the hall as they were about to depart. "He left us and went to New York when Joe and I were mere children. There was an odd coincidence in his and Juliet's marriage, for he was to be principal clerk in his father-in-law's establishment. Like your son, he carried flattering letters of introduction, and was presented to the family of his employer. Mary Robson, Juliet's mother, was, like her, an only child, and soon set her an example by falling in love with John; the only difference was, Mr. Robson made it a two years' engagement, and John was partner in the firm long before his marriage. We were to have gone to the wedding; it was before either of us left school, and we couldn't get a holiday; could we, Joe?"

"It was a love match, you know, and they are always hasty, inconsiderate affairs," said Bess, smiling.

"Yes," said Miss Charlotte, with great earnestness; "and I, for one, would be exceedingly grateful to any one who would prevent my doing anything of the sort," and she glanced sideways at her brother as she spoke, who sighed faintly and blushed again.

"Will you go, Bess dear?" asked her aunt, as soon as they drove off.

"Why, aunt, how can I?" asked Bess, reproachfully. "There are the arrangements for Friday evening to be attended to, and no time for it but this afternoon. I must go to the Daceys to-morrow; and in the morning I have some business to settle."

"Business," repeated Mrs. Morrison, "that puts me in mind of a queer trick of Berkely. The other day he comes into my room where I was sitting, sewing, with my door open, and drops a letter in my lap after a word or two. It gave me quite a start till I opened it and found it full of bank notes, and, what you can read here, about a compensation for his living." Here Mrs. Morrison produced a letter from her pocket, and smoothed it out for her

niece to read. "Do you mind what he says about occupying two fine rooms; one of them's Larry's little boot closet; and having such a home as money couldn't procure him elsewhere?"

"Yes," said Bess, thoughtfully lingering over the words; "good men are apt to exaggerate the benefits they receive, and forget the pleasure they give; but, aunt, we must not take this sum from Mr. Morrison, it is neither right nor just; it is three times the worth of his board and lodging."

"Settle it with him, dear, for I never had a head for figures. I told him I'd speak to you, but I think he made me half promise to say nothing about it."

"Here they are," cried Bess, thrusting the paper into her pocket, as the wheels echoed in the street. "Tell them to dress quickly, aunt, and I'll see that Ellen sets on the dinner."

They had enjoyed their drive exceedingly. Juliet had not been in the city since she was a child, so there were many new things to see and be admired; and, as the young wife possessed the ability to be enthusiastically delighted at almost anything which gave others pleasure, the whole party were in excellent spirits.

"Do you like my Aunt Charlotte?" she asked of Mrs. Morrison, as they sat at dinner, after that lady's description of her relative's call.

"Yes, indeed; I was highly pleased with them both," returned her mother-in-law. "The gentleman is young and good looking too."

"Aunt Charlotte isn't handsome, but she is a very excellent woman, papa says. When my mother died, she came to New York to persuade him to let me go home with her for my education; but Aunt Edmonds had heard mamma's last wishes, and seemed naturally to be the one she would have preferred. She is my great-aunt, you know, and directed my mother's education; but Aunt Charlotte didn't feel quite satisfied about the decision."

"What a vivacious manner she has," said Bess; "she made aunt and me quite merry over their effort to find us out this morning. It appears that they all three started out with different ideas of our locality; the coachman firmly believed

us to be inhabitants of Berlin Square, Miss Waters inclined to Burrill Street, while her brother was of opinion that the proper direction was Essex Avenue."

"Essex Avenue," repeated Katie, "what an odd mistake."

"Mr. Waters always associates ideas, his sister says—and Burleigh reminded him of Queen Elizabeth, and Essex grew out of the recollection."

"They must have had a search," said Larry. "It might have occurred to them to consult the letter your father wrote Juliet. Well, are we all going, and when do we start?" he asked.

"Bess can't go on account of an engagement she has, but the rest of us will be ready whenever you say," said his mother.

"I should like to go early, Lawrence; dear Aunt Charlotte, she has always sent me such kind letters."

Mrs. Larry looked timidly at her husband; it was part of her beauty to be shy and dependent. Larry rose, yawning:

"Oh, we'll be early enough, never fear," he said. "Let us say six, and then consider what we shall do to kill time till then."

"You will not have long to dispose of, for it's past four now, and you are obliged to dress, I suppose," said Nell. "At any rate I am going to carry Juliet off to our room, so I'll leave you to your stupidity."

"May I go?" said Juliet, in a whisper. "It is only to see some drawings of Katie's."

"To be sure," he answered, laughing. "I'm going to invade Bess's sacred bowers with the unhallowed smoke of a cigar. Bess, do you remember how you used to persecute me? ha, ha, ha! Mother often came to the rescue in sheer pity for me; didn't you, mother?"

"I mind taking the cigar from you when the girls held your hands. That was the day after the new lace curtains were put up—and I thought it too bad in you not to go up to your own room, where it was always choked with tobacco."

"Berkely, do you smoke?" asked Larry.

"No, indeed, Cousin Berkely would not be guilty of such a horrid habit," said Nell, stoutly.

"I'm sorry to fall in your opinion," said Berkely, laughing, "but I must confess I do smoke, Cousin Nell; not in the parlors," he added, laughing, "but in the little room I seized upon with such rapture as a museum; you would have suspected me, then, if you had seen the boxes of cigars among my curiosities"

"Well, really, what an imposition you are, isn't he Uncle Terry? allowing me to think him innocent of the whiff of tobacco, with boxes of it stored away?"

The old gentleman, who was a growing favorite with Juliet, had consented to make one of the tea-party at Waters', and now retired to finish a book in which he was deeply engrossed.

The girls followed with Juliet, and Mrs. Morrison stayed to talk to Bess.

"Berkely has bespoken a carriage for the week, he tells me, and we'll all ride over to Miss Waters. Now can't you try and come with us, for we'll take no pleasure at all if you don't be there?"

"Why will you not go, Bess?" asked Larry, rising from the lounge by the window and coming over to where his mother and Bess stood.

"Oh, I thought aunt told you that I could not," said Bess, quietly. "I have a great deal to do this evening, and it is impossible to think of it."

"You don't want to go, you mean, and I take it very unkindly in you."

His mother looked from one to the other in surprise. Bess bit her lip and controlled a rising glow upon her face.

"I think, aunt, you had better go up to dress at once You know I'm going out presently, and I want to see you in your new silk. You have no idea of its elegance till you see it, Larry, and it's really the most becoming shade to your mother's complexion."

"I dare say it's gorgeous," said Larry, carelessly; "but, Bess," he added, in an under tone, "why do not you put on something becoming; where is that grand brocade that made you look so queenly last winter? I expected you to go with us to-night and eclipse them all."

Mrs. Morrison answered for her niece:

"Why, then, I think Bess looks as well in the pure colored merino that she wore last night, as she would in the gayest and rarest of silks—but you always had a fancy for fine clothes, Larry."

"I have a fancy for everything fine, mother. I like nothing that is not, and so I object to Bess's apron."

"Object no longer, for I'll take it off, as you see; come, aunt, or I will not have time to help you fix your cap."

The carriage Berkely had engaged, drove up to the door, and the ladies assembled in the parlor, gathering up their skirts and fortifying themselves against the crushing they were about to undergo. Katie and Nell had done their best to intimidate the Waters with their splendor, and their brother's wife vied with them. Bess hovered round her aunt, adjusting the folds of her dress, and the ribbons of her cap, and giving way to the genuine admiration her new dress excited, in whispers to Uncle Terry.

"Now, Berkely, you and Uncle Terry and I will do our best to dispose of this amount of finery in the coach, and then take the omnibus ourselves."

"I'm obliged to you, Larry, but remember the family you visit do not even know of my existence, and I couldn't think of intruding."

Berkely said this as he drew on his gloves and took up his hat; a perfect shower of protests fell on all sides: they looked to his accompanying them as a certainty; they were all strangers except Juliet, and if Berkely didn't go, no one would enjoy the evening at all. But Berkely had another engagement to attend to, and good-humoredly resisted to all their entreaties.

Larry seemed bent on making him go with them; and even after the ladies had departed, he urged the disappointment his mother evidently felt, as a plea for Berkely's reconsidering his determination.

"See," said Berkely, laughing, "I have Nelly's pin to mend; I promised her to take it to her jeweller's, and that alone would prevent me from changing my plans."

"Then you don't mean to go home to Burleigh Place to tea, I suppose?" asked Larry, as they parted.

"I can scarcely say," said Berkely, and walked rapidly away.

To the jeweller's was but a square or two from the street corner where he had left Larry and his uncle, and Berkely went straight in that direction, taking the little box in which Nellie's pin was from his pocket as he went along. It was near Christmas time, and Berkely's real object was the purchase of presents for that season, and as jewelry could contain more value in a less pretentious form than any other, it naturally occurred tc him to look at Dubois's stock.

Mr. Dubois himself received him, and examining the pin Nelly had sent, remarked, laughingly, that it was an old customer. "I have repaired this pin at intervals of three or six months, ever since Miss Morrison bought it," he said.

Berkely ventured to hint that its original form could not have been very substantial; but the jeweller assured him that Miss Nelly was hard on pins—that she expected them to endure too much, and actually drove them into scarfs and ribbons. Miss Katie, however, he must say, did not patronize him in that way; she had a little pearl branch that had not been out of order in five years."

"You seem to know the family, sir," said Berkely, smiling, as he looked into the show-case for something that might suit the bride.

"Yes," he answered; "Miss Saunders' mother had some jewels reset with me more than a dozen years ago. That was the first I knew of them, and since then I've supplied the family with everything they ever bought in my trade. A very fine

family, sir, particularly the young gentleman. You know the young gentleman, I suppose ?"

"We are cousins," said Berkely.

"Then you can tell me when he is likely to be here, I am really anxious to see him ; there's a little difficulty, you know between Miss Saunders and me about some jewelry. I suppose as you belong to the family, there can be no impropriety in my naming it to you. Can there ?"

A dozen hasty thoughts flashed through Berkely's mind. It might be some trouble that he could avert, some wrong that he could resent, or some difficulty he could assist her in meeting ; he remembered the jewelry she had spoken of selling, and for a moment his desire to understand it all was predominant ; but to come to the knowledge in an underhand way, to deceive her by being in possession of a secret she meant to keep hidden, seemed unkind and unmanly ; so he said :

"I am not related to Miss Saunders, and she has told me nothing of the transaction you mention ; perhaps she would rather you didn't repeat any business that"——

"Very right, very proper," assented Mr. Dubois ; "but it was not Miss Saunders I meant to speak of particularly, it was Mr. Lawrence Morrison ; he brought me a complete set of rubies and diamonds about eight months ago that he knew I had once reset. They were a little out of repair, particularly the necklace, from being used in a tableau, he told me, and I mended some links and supplied a pin or two. They were all perfect then. Between that time and a few days ago, the diamonds were displaced, and paste substituted in their stead ; they were done so neatly, that even I did not discover it at a glance, and I very much wish to see Mr. Morrison, as he was the one to whom I gave them in a perfect state."

"Then Miss Saunders knows nothing of the loss ?" asked Berkely, breathlessly.

"Oh, yes, of course I was obliged to tell her they were no longer worth the sum I had once offered for them, and give her the reason why. Miss Saunders did not give me Mr. Morrison's address, although I was anxious naturally to have him sub-

stantiate my statement. She seemed staggered and distressed for a time, but said it was not necessary to investigate."

"What, may I ask, could she gain by investigation?"

"Why, don't you see," said the jeweller, argumentatively, "here is a valuable collection of jewels, that to her knowledge, as she at first admitted, never entered any professional hand except mine; yet they had been neatly altered, and it certainly was worth while to know by whom."

"Have you got them here?" asked Berkely, suddenly struck by a happy thought.

"No," said the jeweller, decidedly, "I immediately returned them to Miss Saunders, you see, when I could no longer offer the price she demanded; there was no use in one wasting words about terms."

"Can you get them for me, Mr. Dubois? Let us come to the point at once. I have a great desire to purchase these jewels; will you negotiate the business for me; they are worth to me the price she asks for them, and I shall be greatly obliged if you will manage it."

"But, my dear sir, consider the oddness of such an affair; three days ago I assured her positively the rubies were comparatively valueless to me, and I really don't know how to retract my statement or explain the case. You being a connection, as you say, and no doubt an intimate friend, can manage it between you much better, I should think."

"I want it to be a strictly business transaction, Mr. Dubois, and I have no doubt it will involve some little trouble to you I am about to become a purchaser of some articles in your line, to a small extent; do this for me, and I will buy here. Say to Miss Saunders that you have found a purchaser willing to pay well for the rubies, and ask what percentage in the transaction you think proper."

"My dear sir, it is a business rule with me to be ready to oblige customers to any extent. I'll think of some pretext to recall my decision in Miss Saunders' case, and you shall hear from me to-morrow."

"Why not say at once. While I look over this case, please

write a word or two that I can carry to her. Say that you ask for another look at them, there may be a doubt of the substitution, you know."

The jeweller followed Berkely's eyes as they wandered over the show-case.

"What style of article did you wish to select, Mr. Morrison?" he asked.

Berkely, whose business faculties were of the brightest, saw at a glance that the amount of his bill would greatly affect Mr. Dubois's unwillingness to acknowledge himself mistaken in a professional matter, so he looked out two pretty enamelled watches for Katie and Nelly, and a delicate cluster of pearls for the bride's hair, which, taken together, amounted to a price sufficient to outweigh the jeweller's scruples. When he added to this a jet and pearl brooch for his aunt, and a bouquet holder for Bess, Mr. Dubois wrote, almost at his own dictation, a note to Miss Saunders, rescinding his refusal to buy her set, and hinting that his judgment might have been hasty about their alteration.

"She will, no doubt, come with these articles to-morrow," said Berkely; "I will leave the money in your hands early in the morning; the jewelry you will please keep until I can see about having the spurious ones replaced." So saying, and thanking him heartily for his kindness in the affair, Berkely left the jeweller's with a light heart.

It was dark, and long after the early tea-time in Burleigh Place, so he did not go directly home, but, after looking over the paper in a Chop House, took a stroll up towards Myers' Lane, now in a blockade state of bricks and mortar. Dirt and neglect had succeeded in defacing what had originally been meant for comfortable dwellings there, and Berkely had come into possession of some desperately villainous looking tenements through the title deeds of Doctor Windell. Some twenty years before, large plans for the transportation of merchandize on the river running close in the neighborhood, had lent a momentary impetus to the sale of property there. Blocks of houses on a spacious scale had been commenced on all sides, but, before their completion, a railroad for the same purpose, had been projected in a more central

part of the city, and had detracted from their worth so extensively, that the work was for a time deserted, and then taken up in a rough, careless way, as being, at the best, a precarious investment. Thus it fell out that laborers in the brick-yards round about, herded their families together in squads on different stories of houses too large for their single occupancy, and lone women took in washing in the parlors, and oyster-hawkers flourished on the second floor. Finally, a still worse class fell into possession, and rows and drunkenness revelled in Myers' lane. One of the houses burst forth as a tavern, a half dozen large greenish decanters, partly filled with spirits, ranged on a shelf behind a green wooden counter, announced the fact ; and two or three small barrels that stood over against the wall, redolent of rum and whisky, spread it abroad. Further up the street was a small grocery, not so thriving in custom, for the tavern was constantly surrounded, whereas only a sparely clad woman or a ragged child flitted in and out with small parcels from the door of the other.

In the matter of children, Myers' Lane was redundant ; they were the only luxury belonging to the locality, and sprung up in a night with a mushroom-like growth. Berkely, in his first glance at the property, was actually appalled at its prolific nature in this regard ; but, seeing their half-naked, dirty, hopeless condition, inspired him with courage to begin improving, and make them live better as a foundation. So the Myers' Laners were served with notices to leave ; and to provide among the rackety tenements of the neighborhood lodgings for such as hoped to go back into the improved quarters, gave occupation to many an hour of the new landlord. Then began his improvements, that, except in plan, were only yet in embryo. To make two comfortable, convenient, and practical dwellings out of each miserably out-of-repair house, required a thoughtfulness for the need, and a knowledge of the ways and means of poverty, that was no injury to Berkely to gain in studying from nature ; it was a pursuit that afterwards made his heart ache and his courage quail. Still, as he had declared to his aunt that occupation was a blessing to him, he certainly gained it in that way ; and, as doing good is the

secret of happiness, it may have accounted, in part, for the pleasure he felt in his new life.

On this particular night he merely glanced at the place in passing, and taking a short turn came under a lamp and looked at his watch. It was eight o'clock.

"She will be at leisure now," he thought, and hastened homewards.

There was no light in the parlor, so he went directly back intc the dining-room, where, as he had expected, Bess sat beside a shaded gas-burner, with some papers and an account book open before her. She pushed them aside as he came in, and rose, shading her face from the little light there was.

"I have been making up bills, you see, Mr. Morrison," she said, trying to yawn and look weary, but, despite of her effort, appearing anxious and disturbed. "It is dark here ; let me light the other burner," she added.

Berkely did it for her, and she swept her bills into a stand-drawer and locked it. When the room was light she was very pale, and Berkely could not avoid glancing at her in alarm.

"I dislike figures so much," she said, noticing his expression, "that they always perplex and annoy me beyond measure. I was such a stupid girl at school in arithmetic, that my teacher had no patience with me."

Berkely took the leather case from his pocket containing Juliet's pearls.

"I want to consult you about these," he said ; "I haven't a particle of taste in ladies' dress until I see it in motion, then I must say I know at a glance if it looks well. Young Mrs. Morrison had a flower hanging in her hair to-night, and I thought this had something of the appearance of a cluster of buds."

"It is really the prettiest thing of the kind I ever saw. Oh, it is exquisite ! and Mrs. Larry's hair is darker and richer than mine, and will give it greater effect."

So saying, Bess held it up against her bands of fair hair and laughed.

"I don't wonder Katie distresses herself about my tow-like locks," she said ; "nothing looks well in them."

"Oh, by-the-bye, I got this at Dubois's, and he gave me a note for you," said Berkely, suddenly, as if remembering something. "I hope it is here," he continued, rummaging in his pocket-book to hide the color that he knew was rising on his face. "Ah, yes, here it is," and he gave it to her, taking the ornament from her hand as he did so.

She took it in evident surprise, and opened it eagerly, reading it over once without taking in its meaning. Suddenly it came to her, and her whole face glowed with the knowledge. She glanced up at Berkely with trembling lips, and then burst into tears, the first he had ever seen her shed, and strong and powerful as summer rain. Utterly unprepared for such emotion, he felt actually bowed in its presence, and stood with downcast eyes, not knowing whether to remain or steal quietly away.

She came up to him, and putting her hand upon his arm, and with the other wiped the tears that still rolled over her cheeks.

"I am so happy, so relieved; oh, Mr. Morrison, it was so wretched, so fearfully humiliating to think that I had thrown my life, my heart away on a wretch without a gleam of human honesty in his soul—to see one abyss of blackness after another open in his nature, and to shudder at the horror I had worshiped as an idol. Oh, what am I saying—do not listen to me ; God help me, it is harder to bear pleasure than pain !"

She spoke in impulsive, uncontrollable emotion, and wept as he had never seen any one weep before, sobbing and trembling like a child.

Berkely's heart was stirred to its very depths ; to him she appeared no longer the stately, self-reliant woman that despite his interest in, he had always felt a little afraid of; but a young girl, bowed and stricken, under a weight of grief. He took her hands and drew her towards him for an instant, till his lips touched the pure white of her forehead.

"God bless you, Bess Saunders," he murmured ; "God bless you for a noble, true hearted woman !"

The door opened behind them ; he glanced round and saw

Larry standing there, with his cloak thrown over his arm, his cigar in his hand, but with a black scowl darkening his handsome face.

CHAPTER XIV.

LARRY'S HEADACHE.

Larry himself was the first to speak; both Bess and Berkely were too much surprised at his sudden advent to recover themselves at once.

"I am sorry I intruded, upon my word I am," he said, in the most apologetic of tones. "I had a headache to-night, and the Waters have a grand piano. Juliet and Katie and Nelly outdid each other at it, and seeing nothing but destruction before me, I fled, leaving them to Uncle Terry's escort."

"Is there anything I can do for you, Larry?" asked Bess, almost kindly. She smoothed out Mr. Dubois's note, and put it carefully away in her bosom, as she spoke; her quiet self-possession came back, and she looked happier and more at ease, despite her red eyes, than Larry had seen her since his return. He had a keen glance of his own, and he looked covertly from one to the other as he threw himself on the lounge, with the evident intention of discovering the cause of the emotion he had witnessed.

Berkely took up an old book Uncle Terry had left on the mantelpiece, and drew an easy-chair towards the light.

"You want to do something for me, Bess? Well, that's kind, and I dare say you can cure my head in a jiffy. You know all about these things, and were a capital nurse once."

"I should think a cigar the worst thing possible, and to begin with, you'd better throw it away," said Bess. "I'll make you a cup of tea, if you think it will help you."

"Anything you do for me, Bess, must help me," said Larry, adding, as she turned quickly and looked coldly on him, "You remember that old woman that lived with us when you were a little girl, old Nancy Monoghan? she used to aver that you had, what Irish people call the lucky touch, and could cure whatever you set your mind on."

Berkely laid down the book he had been looking at, and, glad of the opportunity, plunged into the subject of the "lucky touch," its meaning and origin, both of which he was ignorant of, but profoundly interested in Ellen O'Toole, who having just been the "length of the corner," she said, "to see a neighbor Gamel," had come home and stirred up the fire, so that the kettle was soon boiling. Being of a friendly nature, she came in to inquire into Larry's ailments and offer advice.

"Here's Ellen that can tell us all about the 'touch,' can't you, Ellen?" asked Larry.

"Is't the titch?" she replied; "faith can I. It's the siventh son of the siventh son that has the raal power in the fingers. Sure my father's brother, Myles, was one of thim, and his son Murphy was another. Mr. Larry, sir, ye may believe me or ye may believe me not, but there's thim livin' that can tell the doin's ov Murphy O'Toole, and sure it would make the hair rise on yer head to hear some ov thim."

"Give us an idea of the style of his doings, Ellen," said Larry, gravely. "Please tell us one of the least terrible of his achievements."

Ellen took up her position in the doorway, between the dining-room and kitchen, as being a sort of neutral ground, and with a large iron spoon, that she always carried with her through every occupation, pointed her remarks:

"Did ever you hear ov the way he tuck the black curse off widdy Branagan's heifer? Well, thin, I'll tell ye, for Miss Bess draws the tay hersilf, so I'll jist pit in the time tellin' yez this till it's ready. Me father was once a well-to-do farmer, although I'm livin' out in a strange kitchen the day, and me Cousin Murphy had a horse for his own ridin' that

was the knowinest baste ye iver mit. Sure Murphy sold him twice, wanst intil the County Chase, and wanst to a Kings County man, and both times he come rearin' back intil the byre, havin' thrown the poor man that was ridin' him home, an' him so frightened with the kickin' of the baste that he was a feared ov his life to go near him, and gist was glad to take half his money and lave him behint him. Well, ye see widdy Branagan had a good field at the ind ov our place, and Murphy's mare tuck a chance ov the grass there wid her heifer——"

A long, loud ring at the door left the two animals peacefully grazing, whilst the narrator made all the haste that belonged to her bulk in opening it. It was the party returning, and they came directly back into the dining-room where Bess stood at Larry's side, holding the cup of tea she had made for him.

"Lawrence," cried Juliet, running towards him, dropping her furs at her heels in her excitement, "are you ill, darling? We only missed you when Cousin Joe came down from the library, and I couldn't possibly remain, uncertain as I was about you."

"Pshaw, Juliet, don't be absurd!" answered her lord, ungraciously. "I had a headache, but didn't think it necessary to alarm the whole establishment on that account. Bess, this tea is delicious; I have never tasted such tea since you made it for me before;" and he looked at her with a gratitude that was almost fondness.

His wife glanced towards him uneasily, while Mrs. Morrison, who had just got herself out of her wrappings, bustled up in great concern.

"Is it cold you've taken, Larry? or was it the fried oysters? I've felt a weight on my own heart ever since I ate them. Or, may be," she added, "you felt the heat of that upper room where the books were. It was more than I could bear, and I don't wonder that your cousin Joseph has the color he has if he sits there, my dear Juliet."

"Oh, mother, don't be foolish; I have a headache, that's

all, and you all look as if I was struck with paralysis, or something fatal."

"I imagined you must be quite ill," said Katie, quietly; "because nothing but serious illness would justify me in going away from a company under like circumstances, and I judge others by myself."

Katie was offended; so was Nelly, and their mother and Juliet were divided between concern and annoyance.

Berkely, who rather enjoyed Larry's being obliged to account for an illness that he knew was fictitious, made a pretense of consulting Uncle Terry about the old book he had picked up, and watched the scene as it progressed.

Bess gathered up the tea-things and carried them out; and Larry, lying there surrounded by so many anxious females, had nothing left for it but to get angry, which he immediately proceeded to do.

"Well, by Jove!" he commenced, sitting upright and thrusting back his hair, "it's as much as one's life's worth to complain, here. What is the matter with you all? Was I to be forced, with a headache, to endure a long, dull evening, when I could escape it by going home? I left my regrets with Mr. Waters, and I'll call in the morning on his sister."

Katie gathered up her things. "Juliet, shall we say good-night in your room?" she said. "I'm very tired, and so are you, I'm sure. Nelly, can you carry Juliet's muff?"

They all three departed together, Juliet casting, as she went, a look of solicitude towards her husband, but venturing no further remark.

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do, Larry," said his mother, decidedly, as the door closed; "and you needn't pooh and pshaw, for it'll have no weight with me. I'm just going to give you a good big bowl of warm balm tea, with a spice of ginger in it, and get your feet in mustard and water, as soon as I lay off my dress and get a wrapper on me."

Larry sprang up and stamped on the floor, while Berkely

broke out laughing heartily. Mrs. Morrison, astonished and indignant, exclaimed, bridling:

"Is there anything wrong in that? the best doctor in the land could do no better, and I've tried it again and again."

"Forgive me, aunt," said Berkely, abashed. "I really don't know what is the matter with me, ha, ha, ha! It must be this old story of yours, Uncle Terry."

"Well," said Uncle Terry, "may be it is, though I found it very affecting myself."

Larry gave his cousin an angry look, and, catching up his cloak and hat, hurried off, to escape his mother's benevolent intentions concerning him, which were in full force of preparation in the hands of Ellen O'Toole, to whom she had given orders.

Finding that he set her skill at naught and eluded her prescription, she was exceedingly wroth, and singling out Uncle Terry, who had said nothing on either side, gave him a good setting down for encouraging Larry in his wilfulness. "And this is what I'll tell you, uncle; since you abetted him in flying in my face, when I'm willing and anxious to do for him, you may nurse him yourself when he's down in the fever that's coming on him, for I'll not lift a hand to help you, not one."

So she departed in great dignity, leaving the old man shaking his head at Berkely and sighing.

"It's really too bad, Uncle Terry," said Berkely; "I hadn't the least idea that I should make my aunt angry when I laughed, but I couldn't help it, I really couldn't help it." And as Larry's trick to get home and watch Bess, resulting in the fright and dismay of the whole family, rose before him, with the perturbation expressed in the face of the object of all their attention, he laughed again and again; while Uncle Terry indulged in a prolonged head-shaking.

CHAPTER XV.

"JUDITH KILLETH HOLOFERNES."

"WHAT is all this Juliet has been saying about the tableaux to-morrow night, Bess?" asked Larry, on Thursday evening, as they came home from the musical party at Dacey's. "What are they going to be? and who are you going to have appear?"

"They are going to rehearse to-morrow afternoon, and you'll know all about it then," said Nelly. "But shan't we need Larry, Bess? Who have you got for Holofernes?"

"I don't know," said Bess, hesitatingly. "I thought—that perhaps—Mr. Harrington might do."

"Light hair and blue eyes in a Holofernes—absurd!" exclaimed Katie.

"I know it's not what one would choose; but what is one to do; dark men are so difficult to get."

Larry looked at her fixedly. "I am dark, Bess, and the easiest attained of human beings. I don't wish to thrust myself forward, you know, but I simply suggest, etc.;" and he laughingly presented himself, bowing.

"Oh, do, do, Lawrence. I shall be so delighted to see you in armor," cried his wife, enthusiastically. "Oh, coax him, Miss Saunders, do."

Bess looked perplexed a moment, and then frankly said:

"There is no one else could do it, or look it, as well as you, I'm sure, Larry; but I thought that you would be so surrounded by congratulations, that you wouldn't have time to dress and take the trouble."

"I'll seize on the character as a means of escape, with all my heart," said Larry; so it was settled, and the next afternoon was one of great excitement, as it brought the expected rehearsal. The parlors had been arranged with a view to seating the company in one and erecting the stage in the other. All the superfluous furniture was moved into the back hall; this com-

pletely blocked up by the tables and ottomans ; and all the extra chairs from the upper rooms were ranged in half circles for seats. Bess, with the supper on her mind, and the wardrobe on her hands, was in an indescribable state of flutter. At four o'clock the young ladies who intended to go into the land of Fancy that night, arrived "to try on their things and get the position," as Nell said. Juliet, who had taken the utmost interest in the whole affair, because her husband was in it, was called for by Miss Waters and her brother to take an hour's drive ; and so Larry was left to be the Larry of old, to the party rehearsing. That is, he teased and charmed them by turns, being really valuable at devising odds and ends of necessary adornments; and thus winning their delighted commendation, he would as earnestly pester them to the confines of distraction, by playing on their words, affecting to mistake the characters they represented, and criticizing their apologies for scenery.

Berkely, who occupied the arduous position of property-man, worked as if his life and reputation depended on his zeal. His stage, in spite of Larry's mistaking it for an enlarged butcher's block, acted capitally, and his curtain drew up with ease, to disclose his faultless background of green baise. At last "the positions" were achieved, and the young ladies hurried away to their homes to dress and be back in the evening. Juliet did not return to tea, which meal the family achieved after their manner on the occasions of great commotion, like a party of Arabs about to take flight. When it was over, and Ellen O'Toole had been hustled into the kitchen with the tray, Jenny Brackett brushed up the carpet, and the table was drawn out to its fullest extent, to be laid for supper. Mrs. Morrison, under Nelly's direction, went up to be drest, and Katie waited on Juliet, who had just returned from her cousin's, where she had drank tea.

Bess then received a visit from two colored men, the one who had mysteriously appeared on the night of Larry's arrival, and another familiar of his, who spread the cloth, arranged the viands, and ornamented the table in gorgeous style. The door of the dining-room during and after ceremony was locked inside, and then the swarthy gentlemen took up their position in the

hall, and escorted the coming guests to the different dressing-rooms. Bess, by dint of cajoling and smoothing her aunt—the most dilatory of living women—got her down in the parlor in time to receive old Dr. Dacey, who was the first arrival; and then having signified to Juliet the little tête-tête sofa which she and her cousin, Miss Waters, were expected to occupy, hurried away to see to the dressing of the three goddesses—for the Judgment of Paris was to be the first tableau. In a small room used as the receptacle of the ironing-board and other homely materials, did the famed beauties get up their classicality by means of white muslin, powder, and gold bands. Bess, who had a sort of natural aptitude for transforming people, gave Belle Dacey a lofty beauty by the aid of india ink on her eyebrows and certain curves in the braids of her hair, that was astonishing to the goddess herself, and was just proceeding to fix Katie's hair, so that it would bear a helmet in a manner not offensive to that young lady's idea of her own beauty, when some one tapped at the door, and the short figure, and bright, dark face of Miss Waters peeped in.

"May I?" she asked, persuasively. "I do want to help you, and if I can't be of use, I'll go away. Try me."

"Oh, come in, Miss Waters, do," cried Katie; "you will be invaluable, I'm sure. If you will be good enough to fasten Nelly's girdle. Oh, don't leave my hair, Bess; no one else can do it."

"My Cousin Bess, Miss Waters," said Nelly, presenting them to each other, and Bess, whose hands were entwined in Katie's braids, bowed low; but the energetic little lady, after a glance at the beautiful face before her, rushed up and kissed her without ceremony, but great heartiness.

"I'm glad to see you, Miss Saunders; do you know that when I heard of Juliet's marriage, I quite despaired; she was so young and impractical, and all that; but since I've begun to see you all, it's a volume of delight, one charming page after another, till I look on our little doll as a benefactor. Do tell me, is there any one else I haven't met? I want to come to an understanding with myself on the score of admiration expended."

"Keep a little for Cousin Berkely, quite a good deal, in fact, for he's a perfect love, as we say of convenient men, who do everything and say everything just in the right time and place."

Nelly, as she spoke, swept out in her long muslin and gold, as lovely a Venus as ever bribed Paris. That young gentleman, who was cooling his classically buskined heels on the kitchen oil-cloth, stood ready, swathed in that complication of lion-skin and white linen, that Art represents as the every-day attire of early Greek shepherds, but which Mr. Little doubted, declaring that the difficulty he found in holding on to his garments, would have prevented him from looking after the smallest possible lamb.

Uncle Terry had trumped up a scene of his own, in which to his nieces' "burning shame," as Mrs. Morrison expressed the sentiment, he assisted to metamorphose Dr. Harrington into an ancient pedagogue, overcome by the smile of a village beauty, whilst about to chastise her for mischievous conduct. Mrs. Warren and three or four others, in *outré* village dress, as over-grown boys and girls, had arrayed themselves for this purpose, and Bess, summoning Adah Parker for Cleopatra, exhorted the gentlemanlike Romans to get into their armor.

"You see, if we have three ready to show, without delay; we can have an intermission while the Misses Lindleys sing, and we prepare the rest," she said.

Meantime the bustle and hurry of feet upon the stairs, and the laughing and greeting, announced the guests as gathering thick and fast.

At last Mrs. Morrison thrust her head in at the dining-room door.

"If you're going to begin at all," she said, "it's nearly time, and the folk look exhausted."

Bess's face glowed, and her eyes danced with excitement and exertion.

"In one moment, aunt," she cried. "In just one moment——"

As she said, the announcing bell rang next moment, and

every one fell into that breathless expectancy that precedes an exhibition of any kind.

Bess had forced Mr. Little into a Paris-like attitude of wavering admiration, and given Belle Darcey's head a majestic twist as Juno. Nell fell naturally into an arch-decoying Venus, and Katie admitted of no suggestion or change in her idea of Minerva, calm and lofty. Just one moment given to the adjusting of folds and throwing back of drapery, and then Uncle Terry and Berkely answered Bess's bell by slowly withdrawing the curtain on either side—and Mr. Little became conscious of an intense desire to be ubiquitous as he found himself regarded by so many eyes, while the ladies felt a slight tightening of the breath, but a glow of enthusiasm that upheld them through the ordeal, for they knew they were looking lovely. Another tinkle and it closed again, and then in answer to the encore re-opened twice. The goddesses, denuded of their immortality, hurried down and took off their robes celestial, to put on the livery of attendants of Egypt's queen, who was in a state of agonizing uncertainty as to whether her hair should fall around her or be bound in pearls under her crown. Miss Warren, dressed as a rustic beauty, was endeavoring, in connection with Miss Waters, to persuade Miss Parker into the braids, but not even a dozen prints of the Royal beauty in different attitudes, but always in the one style of hair, could outweigh her representative's desire to show the length and glossy texture of her own.

"I'll let Bess decide," she said at last, which admission greatly relieved her two attendants. The waiting women were to be dressed, and to them Miss Waters instantly devoted herself, handing over the refractory Egyptian to Bess.

"Let me arrange it, and see if you like it," said Bess. "The village tableau will soon be over, and we don't want even a moment to elapse between them."

Under the scarlet and gold of the head-dress, the bands looked so well that Adah Parker could not object to Bess's

arrangement, and was hurried into an ancient couch, formed by two old high-backed chairs, draped with a red piano cover studded with stars of gold paper. Here, lying "robed and gemmed, her crown about her brows," the Roman soldiers found her. And Nelly, who was one of her attendants, said to Carrie Little, who was another, that she really didn't imagine that Bess could have made such a beauty out of Adah Parker, who looked so well in the tomb of Isis, that it was a pity she should be brought back out of it into modern life.

Then came the pause, in which the Misses Lindley sang melodiously, and all the ladies talked at once in the little dressing-room, while Bess and Miss Waters rushed hither and thither, gathering trinkets off the already exhibited, for new aspirants, and dressing Medora, who was to be the next in order. It was the most becoming of costumes to Katie, as well she knew, so she went on steadily adorning herself for it, while the village school and Roman warriors joined with the Egyptian's waiting-women in discussing the departed glories they had seen.

"I thought I should have died," was a frequent exclamation, and "I never saw anything so beautiful in my life," was another.

Mr. Little poetically described his tremors, and ascribed them to the responsible position of singling one from such a trio of loveliness.

"Where is Conrad?" cried Bess, suddenly. "Mr. Little, where is your Corsair dress?"

Katie, who was in complete Turkish costume, and needed nothing but the head ornaments, had admitted Mr. Little and Mr. Warren into the council about the turban, and the late shepherd of Ida being thus adjured, looked round bewildered.

"Why, you know, Miss Saunders, that I received a note from Miss Morrison,——" he began, but she interrupted him.

"Mr. Waters is going to do Conrad," she said, quietly, to

Bess's intense surprise; "he had part of the dress, and it was so becoming that I begged him to oblige us by bringing it to-night."

Nell, who had just come in appareled for the evening, pinched Bess's arm secretly on hearing this, and looked delighted beyond expression. Miss Waters ran into the kitchen to learn her brother's progress in his new garments, and came back to beg male assistance, as he had "forgotten how the confounded things went on."

Hearing this, Nelly's amusement was redoubled. Under pretext of assisting to place the turban on gracefully, she looked slyly in her sister's face, and was seized with a fit of coughing, at which Katie regarded her with mild displeasure mixed with astonishment.

"The Lindleys have done singing, and the stage is arranged. Come, Medora and Conrad, at once," cried Bess.

"Conrad is winding his leggings round his neck, and his Corsair cap won't stay on, unless its tacked on to his skull," said Mr. Harrington, returning from the kitchen.

At this appalling intelligence, Nelly Morrison indulged in what her sister called "a vulgar fit of ha-ha-ing," and Katie looked disturbed.

"Don't worry yourselves," cried the energetic little Miss Waters; "I'll get him into those things, somehow, if you're not critical as to effect. I really don't understand their use myself, but I've no doubt I can get them all on him."

With this assurance, she sped away, and soon brought back the cheering intelligence that "he was all right."

Perhaps such another Corsair never had been seen, as now emerged on the stage, of Bess's earnest endeavors for artistic perfection. He was a round, good-humored figure in broadcloth; but in costume he looked stuffed to the verge of bursting, and Bess's courage quailed at the sight. His sister had bound him neck and heels into the supposititious garments of a rover on the high seas, and a more pathetic object than he appeared, as he stood thus pinioned, had never met the eyes that rested on him. The little, long-tasselled

cap, which was palpably secured by hair-pins, but gradually working down into the nape of his neck, and the leggings being designed for less protentous calves, refused to meet in the lacing, and displayed a relief of serpentine blue cord on a ground of pink silk hose. To the attitude assumed by Mr. Waters, as the returned lover of the fair Medora, no words could do justice.

"You must fall naturally into a position expressive of delight and rapture," Katie said, in answer to his trembling enquiry of how he "should fix himself."

With this end in view, mingled with an intense desire to cover as much of his limbs as possible with the short skirts of the pirate, he sunk backward and gathered up his legs like a trussed fowl.

"Oh, don't, please, Mr. Waters!" cried Bess, faintly. "That looks as if you were cowering and crouching before Katie; take an easier position, pray do."

But Mr. Waters was immovable for a reason of his own, which transpired after the tableau had been twice shown, and Katie, covered with blushes and annoyance, refused to undergo a third exhibition.

"Come and give me a hand, Mr. Blake, if you'll be so good," implored the brave Corsair. "I've got entangled with myself somehow," and what had before appeared like dogged obstinacy now was explained to be an unhappy accident. The gold gimp adorning one part of his raiment, becoming loose, had fastened itself on his heel, and thus compelled his kneeling or squatting until extricated, when he made haste to divest himself of the silk and tinsel that had made him so wretched.

"Bess, where is Judith, the heroine of Israel?" asked a voice at her side.

She looked round from her occupation of setting the little tea-table that was to represent a part in Uncle Terry's idea of "An old fashioned dish of Scandal," in which Carrie Little, with a false nose and chin, and wig and spectacles, took a refreshing cup of the ladies' beverage in company with a friend of like profile. They were meantime to be giving audience to an old Irish crone

who carried the gossip of the village from house to house, and sold nicknacks in a basket.

It was this character's suit that Bess had made merry in the night before Larry's arrival, but Miss Warren had kindly consented to make herself hideous on this occasion.

It was Larry who spoke, but even Bess, who knew his ability to make himself what he wished, was astonished at the perfection of his dress and figure. He had evidently given his mind to it, for he disappeared shortly after the tableaux began, and the delicate tinting of his complexion, the fierce curl of his moustache and darkening of his brows had all been the effect of careful work.

"You're a Holofernes worthy of my knife," said Bess; "and I'll go and be Judithed this instant, if you, Mr. Morrison, will only attend to the tent and couch."

Berkely gave a ready assent, and Bess flew into the little room from whence Miss Warren, Miss Parker, and Carrie Little were just issuing, dressed for the comic picture.

It was greatly to Uncle Terry's pride and glory that this little scene created much amusement and laughter, and was encored again and again in the different attitudes and progress of the narrative of the old news-monger.

It was over, and a low lounge was wheeled on the stage, and covered with the leopard-skin carriage robe of Dr. Dacey. The crimson curtains off Mrs. Morrison's window were elevated on a concealed clothes prop, and parted on either side of the warrior's couch, thus forming the outline of a tent. Having everything arranged, Berkely looked round for Bess; all the dramatis personæ, whether in evening dress or with scarfs and shawls gathered over their fancy costumes, were clustered in the corners, anxious to see the closing tableau. Larry, looking a warrior of story in his glittering helmet and scarlet scaled with gold, disposed himself on the bed, and let his head-gear and spear and shield drop at his feet. There was no need to suggest grace or expression to him, he caught them both by nature, and looked so perfectly what he was meant to represent, that even Berkely was obliged to compliment him.

"Do you know, Larry," he said, "I would take pleasure in beheading you if I were a Judith, and I've no doubt your cousin will feel the same when she sees you."

She had come as he spoke, and he stepped back amazed at the transformation.

Bess had made her own dress, and certainly spared no pains in ts perfection. The only colors in it were purple and white and gold, but the fantastic shining figures winding in and out of the heavy purple folds gave it an antique air that made one close their eyes to its modern texture. On her head she wore a black turban entwined with bands of rubies in glittering paste ; long strings of pearls fell on her white shoulders, and her neck and arms shone with jewels.

Not one lock of her fair hair could be seen, and the darkness of her brows was heightened, which gave her face its altered air ; she held out her hand for the sabre, and looked approvingly at Larry.

"Lie with your head a little forward, so that my dress won't throw you into shadow, then you'll be perfect," she said.

"You've kept the best wine till the last," said Uncle Terry, "for I never saw the equal of you both."

Larry took Bess's suggestion about his position, and she drew herself close beside the curtain, her hands grasping the knife, and her whole face and figure nerving itself for the blow.

Miss Waters had taken the bell, but, looking at the picture, she forgot to sound it. Berkely nodded to Uncle Terry, and they withdrew the curtain.

"JUDITH KILLETH HOLOFERNES,"

said Berkely, announcing the subject. There was not a sound in all the room. Berkely knew Bess would not bear that it should be repeated ; the tension on thought and nerve was so great, that, for the moment, she felt herself the widow who had put on gay attire and done violence to save her people, so he allowed the picture to fix itself on the minds of the audience before he gave Uncle Terry the signal to close. Slowly the curtain came together, and Larry sprang up laughing.

"I could feel the lightning of your eye, Bess," he said; "and I actually lay there trembling for my head."

Bess shuddered and dropped the sword. It was a light imitation thing, with a silvered blade, and in no wise belonged to the hands that grasped it or the eyes that aimed it.

"Go and dress while I take these things away," whispered Berkely in her ear. She recovered herself at the sound of his voice, and the fierceness died out of her eyes, the hard lines about her mouth relaxed, and she turned quickly, almost rudely, away from the compliments addressed to her, and ran up the back stairway into her own room.

It was only a little while until she came down in her evening dress, as unlike Judith, in long, loose flowing ringlets of pale gold, and a gossamer dress of delicate blue, as it was possible to imagine her.

She found, short as her absence had been, that it had done much for the back parlor; platform, back-ground, and curtain, were removed, the chandelier was lighted, and the piano rolled into place, and all ready for the dancing to commence.

Mrs. Lawrence Morrison, in right of her position as bride, and her own beauty, was belle of the evening; but Bess's Judith was the theme of every tongue, although, through some odd contradiction of feeling, it had become hateful to her. Every mention or allusion to it made her shrink and flush painfully.

Supper was announced, and the party crowded back into the dining-room, filling it completely. Bess, for once, had nothing to do with serving the guests. The expert sable gentleman did everything, and Berkely and Larry directed their exertions. She was standing directly behind Juliet, with Dr. Dacey, whose plate she was superintending, when she heard one of the gentlemen speaking of Larry's performance to his wife.

"How perfectly he dressed; and what an admirable position he assumed."

"He looks well in any style of dress," said Juliet, smiling and gratified; "but that dreadful Miss Saunders, isn't she terrible? She really made me shudder. I cannot admire that tragic kind of person; they're at once unnatural and uncomfortable, I think."

The gentleman (it was Mr. Harrington who spoke,) demurred, politely :

"She is exceedingly handsome, to my mind : a little haughty, or severe, or whatever you may choose to call it, but, certainly, handsome."

Juliet laughed, a thin, sharp laugh, and a little angry withal.

"One would think you gentlemen bewitched by Miss Saunders," she said. "Mr. Morrison is just as bad, and never ceases admiring her ; I cannot, for my life, see why."

Bess answered vaguely the Doctor's comments on the evening's entertainment. She was thinking—"This, then, is the reason why she avoids and shrinks from me." She felt humbled and distressed ; for like most cold-manner'd women, she had a yearning, sensitive soul, and to be misunderstood or disliked was a bitter pain to her. In his dread of a confidence springing up between them, it had been Larry's earnest effort to effect this end ; but she, who was at once keen and quick-witted, was, at the same time, the least suspicious of human beings. She saw his character black and hideous enough, and didn't wish to add a shade to its tarnished hue. She strove not to see or think of him, and caught at every hurry and excitement to feed her active mind, and keep it from gnawing at her heart.

She was very, very weary, to-night ; and, after supper, sank back in a corner of the sofa. While the dancers whirled by her, Miss Waters left her niece, and came and joined her.

"You're tired, I know, and it's shameful to bother you," she said, "but I want to tell you how delighted I have been by the tableaux."

"I should tell you," said Bess, rousing herself, "how much they owe to your kind and efficient aid. I don't know what we should have done without you."

"Don't mention it : we generally do what pleases ourselves and then think it a great virtue in us. I like to help about such pretty things ; it's a thorough treat to me, and I deserve no praise for enjoying it."

She looked round the room an instant, and added, quickly:

"What a very sweet-looking girl your cousin, Miss Morrison, is. She has a truly classic face."

"Yes, indeed," assented Bess. "Katie is perfectly lovely to-night."

"My brother thinks so," said Miss Waters, shortly.

"I can scarcely see who could help it; and I dare say Mr. Waters has excellent taste."

"Taste is one thing, and common sense is another," his sister began, as if about to enter on a lengthened discourse; but she checked herself suddenly, by saying: "I've never had any of that."

Bess, not knowing how to meet this statement, remained silent.

"Therefore, as Joe has no judgment," continued Miss Waters, "I consider it my duty to choose for him. Yes, she's a very pretty girl; but then they're a handsome family—Mr. Lawrence is quite a picture, and Miss Nellie is so arch and winning."

Bess colored slightly. "I consider myself so nearly allied to them, that discussing their merits critically is not in good taste on my part," she said, smiling.

Miss Waters answered readily:

"You're quite right, and I'm ashamed of myself for drawing you into it. Joe admires Miss Morrison; I saw that the instant they met; she is not averse to his homage, I see that, this evening. I've a kind of habit of tumbling out my mind, as the Duchess of Marlborough said. Forgive me for having a sisterly desire to find out your opinion."

Up came Larry, with Adah Parker on his arm.

"Are you saying that Judith was *too* natural, as your silly little niece does, Aunt Charlotte?" he asked.

"Oh, Miss Saunders, it was the best tableau of them all; everybody says so," said Adah.

"I wasn't speaking of the picture at all, Lawrence," said Miss Waters; "but, now that you mention it, I agree with

Miss Parker, it was the picture of the evening, and Miss Saunders was a perfect Judith."

"Pray let us be still. Miss Lindley is going to sing with Mrs. Morrison," said Bess, looking confused and distressed under the compliments they were paying her.

Miss Waters and Miss Parker moved forward into the circle surrounding the singers, and Larry, coming close beside her, whispered in her ear:

"Why do you reject the laurels you have won? You were so beautiful, that I almost wished there had been an edge to that tinseled thing, that I might have died the death I deserve at your hand."

If Bess had considered the man she had to deal with, she would have known that nothing would have piqued or heightened his desire to gain her attention, so much as indifference to him, and all he might think or say. She now simply looked towards his pretty wife, who was twirling a piece of music, preparatory to beginning to sing, and glancing nervously at her husband's earnest face. Moving a step or two, so that her arm could rest on the mantel, Bess became absorbed in the song. Larry followed her, and continued to speak in the same under-tone, still growing more ardent and pleading.

"Why do you not blame me, Bess? Your magnanimity will kill me; I am not worthy of it."

She looked over to the other side of the room, where Berkely sat by his aunt, and caught his eye.

"Shall I call my cousin here?" he said, tauntingly, as he followed her glance. "Ah, Bess, do you think I cannot see your plan?"

She never spoke, but felt that his wife was watching her troubled face, and spoiling her song by guessing at its cause. There were so many pressing round them, that it was impossible to free herself from his contact: she scarcely knew whether a dread of attracting attention, or a wild desire to get away from him, were the stronger in her breast, when a

good, truthful voice, at her shoulder, with a faint touch of timidity in it, said :

"Miss Saunders, you are being crushed here ; shan't I give you my place in this recess ?"

She darted a glance, full of grateful thanks, at Mr. Waters, and instantly glided into the place he had vacated for her. He did her a still greater favor by closing her in with his burley figure, and cutting off Larry's design in following her.

Bess breathed freely, and looked in Mr. Waters' ruddy face, glowing with health and bashful good humor.

"Do you like that kind of singing, Miss Saunders ?" he asked, abruptly.

She looked at him inquiringly.

"Miss Lindley's and young Mrs. Morrison's, do you mean ?" she asked, smiling.

"Yes, theirs, or any of the young ladies who sing now-a-days; it's bewildering, you know, actually bewildering."

Bess, whose mind was wool-gathering about Mrs. Larry's instantly retiring at the conclusion of her song, and Katie's being sent for, while Nelly and Miss Warren sat down to play a duett together, answered vaguely :

"Yes, I suppose you find it so—certainly."

"Why any one would," said Mr. Waters, in an injured tone. "In the first place, they repeat the words till you lose their sense, and then they do that horrid invention they call trilling, that makes you nearly mad as you try to follow it in your own mind ! Oh, it's shocking. Now you don't sing, Charley says, so I can tell this to you without dread of an explosion."

"No, I don't sing, Mr. Waters, as you say; but I think your niece has a charming voice ; it is not her fault that the fashionable songs are arranged so, you know."

"Oh, I don't blame Juliet ; but if she would only shorten 'em a little—sort of curtail the trills. Don't you believe she could do something of that sort, if she tried ?" he asked, seriously.

While Bess, with an anxious eye watching for Katie's reappearance, answered him abruptly, the dancing recommenced, and

part of the company began to leave. Larry was not in sight, and begging her companion's pardon for deserting him, Bess hurried to her aunt's side, who was still in conversation with Berkely.

"Is there anything wrong?" she asked, in a whisper.

"Juliet fainted from the heat, Larry says," answered her aunt, mysteriously, in the same tone; "but if you believe me, I'd be willing to lay my life, it was nothing but the singing. Sure it was worse than a hard day's labor what she went through with, straining her throat at that last tilt she sung."

"Is she ill?" asked Bess, showing by her changed color the alarm she felt.

"Not now, and Katie's with her, so is Larry. We're to make no stir whatever, you know; it would be unpleasant, and Katie will be back in a few moments."

Katie came, and evidently apologized to the departing guests, for Mrs. Larry's absence; there was a set still dancing, and a few lingering round the pictures and over the piano, but the greater portion of the company were cloaked and hooded, or on their way to the dressing-room.

Another hour, and the lights in the chandeliers were out, the parlors were emptied, and only a faint side-light glimmered, to show the broken bouquets, the disarranged furniture, the scattered music, and drooping wreaths that had been so pretty a few hours before.

Katie was still up in Juliet's room, but Nellie and her mother were gone to bed. Uncle Terry had made his escape upward soon after the dancing began, and there was no one astir in the house but Bess, who was overlooking the clearance in the dining-room, so that she might be sure of breakfast being laid in order next morning.

She was very tired, and worked with difficulty—half the time forgetting what she held in her hand, or where she meant to place it. Ellen O'Toole, who saw the folly and vanity of all earthly entertainments very clearly just then, was aiding her more in counsel than act.

"Sure it's a black botheration, Miss Bess, and thim that ye

sarve wid the best, and that's aitin and drunkin at yer expense, is the last to rise a hand to help ye whin yer wantin'. My father's brother had a bit of town land of his own, and a good lump of a house over his head; but wid feastin' this one, and that one, an' havin' all the riff-raff ov the counthry flockin' till he stuffed wid his dainties, he come to a poor ind at the long run. Not, Miss, that I'm comparin' the likes of Pether O'Toole to you, for he was a horse-daler, and tuck to drinkin' an' swearin' naturally; but there's a moral to everything."

"Ellen," said Bess, suddenly catching at the sideboard to save herself from falling, "come here. I'm going blind. What is the matter with my head? Quick, shut the door, and get me some water!"

Ellen dropped a dish of mangled jelly with a crash, and flew to her mistress' side. She had become a deadly white in color, and lay back against the wall with closed eyes and drooping head. Ellen was a strong-armed woman, so with no more ado, she lifted the fainting girl and laid her on the lounge beside the window, and then emptying the lees of different wine bottles in one glass, held it to her lips, and forced her to swallow a mouthful.

"Aisy now, darlint; ye'll soon be yerself agin; will I call your aunt, or the young leddies? Sure they'd be sorry to see ye like this."

"Don't stir," cried Bess, sitting up in alarm; "I'm quite well again, it was only for a moment; but I'll have to go up to my room, and leave the rest to you."

"Don't spake ov it, Miss, dear; why I'll fly at the table and have everything off before yer well up stairs. An' if ye'll say the word, I'll stir up some whisky and sugar wid a sup ov hot wather, an' it 'll make ye feel like a new craythur."

Resisting this kindly proferred cordial, Bess resigned the partially cleared table into Ellen O'Toole's hands, and burning, and shuddering by turns under a paroxysm of fever, crept up to her room, and entered her door as the hall-clock struck five.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SHADOW OF A WRONG.

It was nearly noon next day when the family assembled in the breakfast-room, and yawning and a little bit depressed, recurred to last night's gayeties.

"But where's Bess?" exclaimed Mrs. Morrison, looking round in amazement as Ellen signified the coffee to be ready. "I'm so flustered this morning, with one thing and another, that I never thought to ask for her till this minute."

"I knocked at her door this morning, and got no answer," said Jenny Brackett. "Miss Bess must be sick, cause she'd been down if she was well, sure."

"No, she's not really sick," said Nelly; "but she worked so hard at those things yesterday that I've begged her to rest to-day till it's time to go to the Littles'. I'm going to take her up some tea."

Uncle Terry glanced up in approving surprise.

"Nelly, you're a jewel, and have done a good deed, if you've persuaded Bess to rest."

"Is Miss Saunders ill?" asked Juliet, gently. "I supposed she was very healthy; she looks so."

"There," cried Uncle Terry, "that is her footstep in the hall. I knew Nell couldn't induce her to take care of herself."

She came in as he spoke, and looked very wretched and unlike Judith, or the appearance she had made in the delicate blue dress.

"Good morning," she said. "You are all looking better than I do; but I've caught cold, I suppose, and shall have to stop at home and mope, while you see the Christmas-tree to-night and hear a Christmas sermon to-morrow."

"Not so serious as that, I hope, Bess," said Nelly; "only take my advice and rest, and you'll be ever so much better by night."

But Bess had made up her mind, and insisted on calling her illness a cold, and treating it to a shawl and hoarhound tea ; but neither lying down nor keeping her own room. Mrs. Larry paused beside her to speak quite kindly before going up to dress for a drive with Larry and Nell, and Mrs. Morrison had to be coaxed into keeping their engagement with the Littles, in her anxiety to stay home and nurse Bess. At length, the party that had been out riding returned, and all started together to the Littles. The dinner had not been eaten with Christmas ardor, although Bess took care to have it Christmas in fare. It was late when they dined, and immediately after they dressed it was time to go.

Just as the carriage drove up that the ladies were to go in, Katie ran down into the dining-room, where Bess was, and whispered in her ear :

" Please lend me your bracelets, Bess, I'll take care of them ; and my plain gold bands look out of taste with this heavy brocade of mine."

Bess sprang up instantly, and ran up stairs ; in a moment she came back with a large black morocco box, and laid it before her. Katie glanced over it, and then turned to her cousin in surprise.

" Why, Bess, they're not here !" she exclaimed.

Bess colored and hesitated.

" I thought it might be the pearls, or these jet and gold ones, that you wanted," she said timidly.

Katie tossed them in a heap into the case again.

" You know I never could endure pearls on the arms, Bess ; but if you preferred not letting me have your real jewels, you might have said so, and not troubled yourself to bring this trumpery down."

" Katie, I have not got the diamonds, they are at the jeweler's. I would have brought them at once if it had not been for that."

Katie was thoroughly provoked ; there were few subjects on which she felt so keenly as that of her own appearance, and having made up her mind to wear a certain style of dress, she resented any inopportune event that made her change it.

"You have never worn them since they were mended last, Bess; but they are your own, you know, and you are right to be careful of them if you wish to."

Bess's cheeks grew redder than ever, and for a moment she gave her cousin an indignant angry glance; but it died away in tears, and she sate down trembling.

"Please don't speak so, Katie. I should be so glad if I had them here to offer you. You know that, Katie, as well as I can tell you."

Katie looked into the box a second time, and as she glanced at the jets, became a little mollified.

"I depended on the diamonds, Bess, and it was so annoying to be disappointed; but these jets will do better than nothing, if I may have them."

Bess rose hastily and clasped the bracelets on the white arms of her cousin; they looked still whiter with the shining black bands around them, and Katie became almost satisfied at the change, when she saw how pretty they were.

"We are waiting, Katie," cried Nell, from the hall.

"Put these away—quick, Bess; don't let Juliet know they are not mine: she is just one of those little-minded people that you had better not trust with your small affairs. Ah, there you are, all prepared," she cried gaily, as the object of her restrictions appeared in elegant toilet at the door. "Oh, what a perfect dress, Juliet! Those white acacias on that lilac ground are lovely. Just see, Bess; isn't it perfect?"

"You can get that style of thing nowhere so well as at Stewart's," said Nell; "and when Larry goes home, I'll insist on his getting us something like this."

"That brocade of Miss Saunders is far more elegant than any I saw there," said Juliet, candidly. "I think it is perfectly exquisite."

"A convention on that mighty theme—dress, Berkely; and the coachman, driven to desperation, in the cold waiting for them. Come on, in mercy's name!"

Larry thrust in his head to say this, and Bess, drawing her shawl around her, went towards the door to see them off.

"Let us pack Juliet in last," said Larry, escorting his mother down the steps. "She has such a variety of frills and flounces, that she will need all the room left to bestow them in."

"Take care of yourself, Bess," cried her aunt, from the carriage.

Bess leant forward to assure her that she would, and as she did so, she caught sight of a lady, richly dressed, coming up the walk, with a step that seemed familiar to her. Katie and Nellie had got in, and Larry was just crossing the pavement, with his wife, when the lady approached and slowly passed by them. She was a very handsome woman, with a cold, proud face, a striking figure, and half-defiant air. She looked first at Bess, but it was only a glance, and then she turned her eyes on Larry —a long, full, searching look that held him, while she came up and leisurely crossed his path.

"Who is that?" said Juliet, eagerly, from the window. "What a very odd looking woman; and how she stared!"

"Drive on," said Larry, white as a ghost, and speaking excitedly. "Put your head in, Juliet. Start on, driver; start on, I say! By Jove! the fellow was in a great taking to get off, and now he creeps like a snail."

The carriage rattled away; passed the tall figure of the handsome woman, the only one in all the square, and turned out into the main street.

Bess had gone back into the house and closed the door.

"Let us walk this way," said Larry; "I want to get the New York papers at a stationer's below here."

Berkely fell into his wake without speaking, and Larry hurried on, for a moment or two, in great haste.

They reached the block down which the carriage had gone, and then he slackened his pace and glanced over his shoulder. The woman who passed him was not in sight. He walked slowly and looked covertly at Berkely.

"Splendid looking creature that; was she not?" he asked.

Berkely struck the snow off the end of his cane on a tree-box they passed, and asked carelessly:

"Who is a splendid creature?"

"Ah, I thought you saw her," said Larry in the same tone, but watching his companion's face narrowly. "The woman who brushed past Juliet as I handed her into the carriage."

"Do you know her?" asked Berkely.

"She is an actress; and I've seen her," said Larry; "but here comes Uncle Terry. Why, I thought you were to stay at home with Bess, uncle?"

"So I am, boy; but I've been down for a book, you see," said the old man, displaying a yellow and aged copy of the "Three Spaniards." "Bess likes a bit of romance, and we'll have a wonderful night of it entirely."

"I envy you, Uncle Terry," said Larry, with every appearance of truth. "I shall be thankful when this week of being trotted out in my new character is over; it's a horrid bore," he added, turning to Berkely as the old man left them.

CHAPTER XVII.

A FIRST GRIEF FOR JULIET.

The spacious parlors of the Little Mansion were all aglow with light. The guests, returning from tea, had found them brilliantly illuminated, and the curtain that hid the Christmas tree removed, and numberless tiny little candles glittering among the present-ladened branches. Old Mr. Little, in the dress of Santa Claus, resonant with tinkling bells, and wrapped in snowy furs, appeared, and, in a Christmas poem, written by his gifted son, welcomed the guests and distributed the gifts.

While every one stood hushed in admiration and interest, a servant man entered softly and touched Berkely Morrison on the arm.

"There's a lady wants to speak to you, sir."

"A lady!" said Berkely, starting in surprise, as the image of

Addie West rose instantly before him ; " are you sure she wants *me* ?"

" It's Miss Saunders," said the man, and, in a moment, Berkely was in the hall beside her.

She was sitting on one of the tall oaken chairs, and had a hood and cloak on. It was snowing outside, and the flakes had almost whitened her head-gear ; she must have come in grea haste, for she was out of breath, and labored hard to speak.

Berkely stood before her in great alarm, but could scarcely find words to question her.

" There was a message came for Uncle Terry. It was from New York—a telegram—and meant for Larry, but enclosed to uncle lest he should be absent. Mr. Waters, Juliet's father, is dying."

Berkely looked round quickly as the door opened behind him, and some one came out. It was Larry. He drew him out quickly towards them, and closed the door, holding the handle as he spoke.

" Miss Saunders has a message for you, from New York. I am sorry to say it is bad news ; the only hope is, that fear has exaggerated the reality."

So saying, he gave Larry the slip of paper on which the message was printed, and which he had received from Bess.

Larry looked at it with knitted brows, and seemed to think deeply in the moment's silence that ensued.

" We must tell her, I suppose," he said, at length, still holding the message, and apparently reading it over.

" Let me get the carriage first," said Berkely. " She had best get home as soon as possible."

He caught up his hat and cloak from the rack, and darted out. In the few seconds that Bess and Larry stood silent after Berkely left them, his face wore an oddly ruminating expression that was new to it, and he seemed scarcely conscious of her pre sence as he weighed some unknown matter in his thoughts.

" I'll go home and be ready to receive her," said Bess, suddenly.

" Wait," said Larry, and he looked at his watch ; " had I best

tell her after all? It is nearly ten now, and the last train goes at twelve; that would take us into New York at four in the morning at this bitter weather. Ugh!" and he shuddered at the thought.

"I will tell her, if you do not," said Bess, slowly, as she gathered her cloak around her. "Her aunt says in the message that her father has asked for her. Remember, she must go."

With that she closed the door, and, hurrying out into the street, now white with falling snow, ran homewards. Although she had almost flown over the ground, she had scarcely got her wet cloak from around her, and lighted the parlors, when the carriage wheels resounded in the streets. Uncle Terry, who had a positive dread of encountering any one in mental agony, had betaken himself to his own room, while Ellen O'Toole, who, on the contrary, was the most sympathetic of living beings, was drawing tea and mending fires, as if those two personal comforts were panaceas for any ill.

"Quick, here, with some water," cried Larry's voice, when the wheels stopped. Bess met him in the hall, with his wife in his arms; her fur-lined opera-cloak fell off her white arms, her head being over his shoulder, while her face was pale as death.

Behind her, crowded the frightened faces of her aunt and cousins. Poor Mrs. Morrison was absolutely speechless with distress.

"Has she fainted?" asked Bess.

"Yes, she was scarcely a moment conscious after they told her; so we just got her into the carriage, and drove home as fast as we could," said Nell, in a subdued whisper.

They laid her on a sofa, and poured wine and water down her throat; they chafed her cold hands and bathed her temples; presently she opened her eyes and sate up. She was silent for a little time, as if bewildered, and then she said, in a frightened whisper:

"Is it true, oh tell me, is it true?"

Bess held a glass with some pungent smelling liquid to her lips.

"Drink this, please, Mrs. Morrison," she said, in a voice full of gentle sympathy.

The young wife looked into the friendly face that bent over her, and catching the hand that held the glass, she kept it in her own until she drained it; then she got up, and gathered her falling hair into her comb.

"I am quite myself now, darling," she said, turning to her husband, and speaking in a faint, broken voice. "I want to lose no time, you know; let us go at once."

Larry took her hand, and putting his arm around her, drew her into a chair.

"Girls, get her traveling things ready, we must be gone in half an hour," he said; and then turned to his wife and seemed to whisper soothingly to her.

Bess ran up stairs, followed by Nell, and together they packed a carpet-bag with such things as they thought would be needed at once, from Juliet's wardrobe. In a little while, Katie and Mrs. Morrison led Juliet up, and dressed her for her mournful journey. She was very quiet and almost composed, but her face had changed into a hard rigidity, that was very unlike the bright, mobile beauty of an hour before.

"Girls," said Mrs. Morrison, suddenly, "one of you should go with her. She does not look like herself, and before all's over, may have a fever, or something of the sort."

Katie and Nellie exchanged glances. Larry caught at the idea at once.

"Yes, girls, both of you come, if it is only for a day or two; she is not able to think of anything just now; the shock's too great, and it will be a kindness to us both."

Katie took Bess aside for a moment or two, and then both sisters ran into their own rooms, and Bess went with them to fold up a dress and morning gown for each, beside the traveling gear they were busy putting on. A few more things caught up at random, filled a small trunk that Berkely produced; and five minutes before the time Larry had given them to be ready in, they all stood in the lower hall, waiting for the carriage.

"God bless you and strengthen you in your hour of need,

dear," said Mrs. Morrison, folding her daughter-in-law in her arms. "His grace be about you; trust in Him and he'll never forsake you!"

The tears were all on the old lady's part; Juliet neither wept nor moaned, but remained cold and silent, with her eyes looking away out into the stormy night, as if she were only anxious to be gone. Berkely had put the girls in the carriage, and telling Larry to write to him for any thing he might be able to serve him in, ran up the steps to assist the poor young wife down the slippery sidewalk. She turned on the topmost steps, and catching Bess's hand, kissed it; then, without a word, hurried away. The coach-door closed with a crash.

"See the Waters to-morrow," cried Larry, from the window; and it rolled away as if for life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BESS OFF DUTY.

Early on Monday morning the old-fashioned green carriage of the Waters' family stopped at the house in Burleigh Place. Miss Charlotte and her brother got out, and without waiting for the coachman to dismount, ran up and rang the bell. Jenny Brackett answered it at once, in a countenance whose solemnity was as unusual as her alacrity. Mrs. Morrison was in,—she would take up the cards, and with rare brevity, she ushered them into the darkened parlor. The shutters had long black streamers floating from their closed centres, and the whole front of the house was blinded. Miss Waters herself wore a dark dress and bonnet, and was shrouded in a black veil. The door opened, and Berkely entered. It might have been the dull light, but he, too, seemed pale and sad, in keeping with the house.

"My aunt will be here presently, Miss Waters," he said. "I came down to beg you to excuse her for making you wait. We

have a serious illness here, and she is greatly distressed by the double trial."

"Illness, Mr. Morrison; who is ill?" asked Miss Waters, quickly throwing up her veil, and showing a poor, worried face, not at all beautified by a pair of very red eyes.

"Miss Saunders was taken ill immediately after they all left for New York, and the doctor tells us it is brain fever," answered Berkely, with a strong effort to appear calm, but an unmistakable appearance of feeling deeply what he said.

"Heaven help me!" said Miss Waters. "Miss Saunders! why she's the only practicable member of the family, and a brain fever too. I can't understand it."

While she pondered on this distracting news, Mrs. Morrison came in, looking so pale and worn, that it was hard to realize that only three days had gone since they saw each other under such different circumstances.

"I am surprised out of my own trouble, Mrs. Morrison, by hearing of yours," said the good-natured little woman, rising and taking the elder one's hand.

"You may well say trouble, Miss Waters," cried Mrs. Morrison, breaking down at once, and weeping bitterly. "Here we are, the girls gone, and Bess, the hope and stay of the house, stretched at death's door. O, Miss Waters, dear, if I was to lose her, it would be a loss indeed; she's all in all to me!"

"It cannot be as bad as that," said Miss Waters, earnestly. "Who is your doctor, and what does he say?"

"Miss Saunders was taken so suddenly, that we were at a loss to know whom to call in. Dr. Windell is a physician Uncle Terry knew, and I went for him at once. I have every confidence in his skill, and he hopes for the best." Berkely interposed to say this, and Mrs. Morrison then went on to say, that the family could not rest after the party had gone to New York; that she herself, being restless, had risen, and putting on a gown, come down stairs, thinking she heard some one moving; that, true enough, there was Bess, wandering up and down the parlors, in a high fever, and "entirely wrong

in the head," as her aunt expressed it ; that they had got her to bed, but that there was no rest for her, for there she lay, tossing and moaning, and moaning and tossing, till it made her heart ache to see her.

"Have you written to your daughters of this, Miss Morrison ?" asked Miss Waters.

"Well, I can't say we have, Miss Waters, for you see I am too through-other to write, and Berkely has been running with prescriptions, and one thing and another, so that it has not seemed easy to think of anything else."

"Mrs. Morrison, I'm going to surprise you, I suppose," said Miss Waters, resolutely ; "but I mean to remain here and take care of your niece, till the young ladies return. I could do brother John no good by simply going to his grave with him ; as for seeing him again, I prefer remembering him as I looked at him last." Here she broke down and indulged in a good hearty cry, for a few minutes, then wiped her eyes and went on, decidedly: "So, Joe, dear, you can go back and start in the noon train. Tell the poor, little orphan how my heart aches for her; but she must understand that, having her Aunt Edmonds and the girls, I am needed less there than elsewhere."

Mrs. Morrison did appear astonished at this summary proceeding, but Berkely encouraged it strongly, in word and manner.

"I'll not see Miss Saunders now, Mrs. Morrison," she went on to say. "I'll just go home with Brother Joe—see him safely started—get a gown for myself, and be back again in less than an hour."

"Indeed and indeed, ma'am, you're both kind and obliging," said Mrs. Morrison, partially recovered from the strangeness of the proposition ; "but poor Bess knows no one now, and maybe it would be too hard for you to—"

"I mean to come and nurse Miss Saunders, my dear Mrs. Morrison, if you'll allow me, so we need say no more about trouble, or that sort of nonsense. I have plenty of trouble on my heart ; my poor, dear brother's is a loss, that I feel

as deeply as if I were following in his funeral train as chief mourner."

Mr. Waters, who had limited his conversation to the fewest monosyllables, but who had looked deeply impressed and affected by all that was said, now rose, and, offering his hand to Berkely and Mrs. Morrison, departed in all grief and solemnity.

In less than an hour Miss Waters returned, as she had said, and being ushered up stairs, by Jenny Brackett, entered poor Bess's darkened room, noiselessly, having disposed of her cloak and bonnet below stairs.

Mrs. Morrison was seated on a low chair, at the bed-side, and rose to meet her as she entered ; but, silently as she stepped, the figure on the bed heard her and rose up, crying out and waving her arms about wildly.

"There, you see, Miss Waters, my poor, dear girl, cannot bear a sound. Oh ! what will we do, anyway, what will we do ?" And poor Mrs. Morrison, weak and broken down for want of rest, gave way to tears again.

Miss Waters' first effort was to lead her forcibly into her own room, and then insist on her lying down to rest, solemnly pledging herself to rouse her at the faintest sign in Bess of missing her, or desiring her presence. Having accomplished this, she returned to the bed-side of her patient, and, softly, arranged the pillows and fastened back the long hair that was scattered loosely over them.

A foot upon the stairs interrupted her, for Bess started up again and became restless at the sound ; it was the doctor, and Berkely, who accompanied him to the upper hall, remained there, while the physician entered the sick girl's room. Miss Waters closed the door, and he waited a long time before it reöpened ; pacing silently up and down on the soft carpet, the terrible stillness of the house, lately so full of life and merriment, sank heavily and ominously upon his heart. Mrs. Morrison's door was slightly ajar, and her regular breathing told that, wearied and exhausted, she was sleeping at last. "What a change," thought Berkely, "and

yet it has been tending to this for months. God only knows what the end will be !" The death of the merchant in New York did not come into his mind as part of the present trou ble; for Larry or his wife he had but little sympathy, and the young ladies' absence, he looked upon as anything but a deprivation; they had none of the qualities that seemed to him necessary in a nurse, and their presence might be a drawback to the quiet so essential to Bess's treatment.

At last the door opened, and Dr. Windell stood in the hall looking into the crown of his hat, and saying a few parting words of directions to Miss Waters. Berkely joined him, and, in a voice he strove to control, begged to know if there were any change in Bess's case since the night before.

"Who is that lady—a relative ?" asked the doctor, by way of reply, as he slowly descended the stairs. Miss Waters had reëntered the room and closed the door, so Berkely, glancing backwards to see that she was not in hearing, said :

"No ; she is a connection of young Mrs. Morrison's, and almost a stranger ; but I thought she would be a good nurse, and my poor aunt was entirely broken down."

"You're right ; she's a capital person, and can do as much for the poor girl as I can. Is there any change, did you say ?" he added, coming at last to the point. "No, there is no change —at least, none that is for the better."

"And you think Miss Saunders' life in danger ?" asked Berkely, breathlessly.

"Fevers of this kind are always dangerous," said the doctor, sententiously ; "but Miss Saunders has a strong constitution, and a good nurse, as I said before."

"When will there be a crisis ? There is a crisis to every fever, is there not, doctor ?"

"I hope I shall be able to give a better account of your cousin this day week," said the doctor, pulling on his gloves ; and nodding good morning, he ran down the steps and got into his close little carriage, that rolled noiselessly away through the snow.

His aunt met Berkely on the stairs with a shawl around her She had awoke in nervous alarm, and now asked :

"It was the doctor, was it not? I heard his voice, though I couldn't make out what he said. What does he think of her?"

"He can scarcely tell what to say yet, but hopes that the fever will not last long. This day week he trusts will bring all right."

"This day week!" echoed his aunt. "The Lord above only knows what may be this day week."

CHAPTER XIX.

LARRY'S VIEW OF PROPERTY.

A STRANGE, dreary life fell upon the household of Burleigh Place. Ellen O'Toole and Jenny Brackett enjoyed the sway below stairs, worked a little, and divided the rest of the time between lamentations and speculations about the family afflictions, occasionally produced a meal that was scarcely tasted, and quarrelled ceaselessly on all points, having no higher court of appeals to settle the question at issue between them.

Mrs. Morrison, looking a ghost of her former plump, good-humored self, wandered from room to room of the darkened second floor, and occasionally took a cup of tea from the hand of the solicitous Ellen, but seldom went down to the dining-room. Berkely and Uncle Terry went out daily, but with the former the interests or demands of his new business were without power to hold him long from the closed and gloomy house he had left, to which he would hurry back again, hoping for some blessed change, yet finding none. The old man, on the contrary, kept away from home, and when there, took his pipe and book comfort in his sunny garret, beside his old-fashioned wood stove.

Charlotte Waters flourished in her new sphere as if it had been her home since childhood, and the doctor came in morning and evening.

Going down stairs, one morning, Berkely found him waiting him in the lower hall, drawing on his gloves leisurely, and glancing upward at Berkely as he descended.

"Where are the young ladies of the family staying?" he asked, in his usual abrupt way.

"Their brother's wife has been very much broken down by the death of her father," began Berkely, in explanation of their absence, but the physician interrupted him.

"You can send for them at once, for Miss Saunders will soon be able to take her place as housekeeper, and make things comfortable again."

Berkely caught the doctor's hand in his, and had half wrung it off before he suddenly checked his impetuous delight, and in a voice that trembled, despite every effort he made to control it, heartily thanked the doctor for the blessed news.

"And she is truly getting better—is she very weak yet?"

The doctor nodded.

"Weak enough, and too weak to have a scene with your aunt, so it will be better to keep her room quiet for a day or two."

Without further parley he departed, leaving Berkely Morrison in a state of exhilaration he could not account for. He turned to go up stairs to see his aunt, but trembled so violently, with the delight of a terrible cloud breaking away and the darkness of despair yielding to hope in his soul, that he was fain to take refuge in the shadowy parlor, and wander up and down until he could regain his composure. His aunt came down stairs and passed into the dining-room on one of her melancholy inspections of the kitchen chimney, that she had all her life been fully persuaded would have taken fire but for this precaution. Berkely hastened after her, studying a form of words through which to convey Bess's former danger and her now promising state, as he went along.

She was standing with her hand on the latch of the kitchen door, and turned round at the sound of his steps.

"What is it?" she cried, faintly, for her nerves had been very much shaken of late. "Is anything wrong, dear?"

"O no, aunt; it's all right," he cried, without the power of

stifling his emotions. "Bess is going to be well again; the danger's all past, and there's nothing to fear now."

Mrs. Morrison sunk into a chair at her side, and covered her face with her hands.

"God be thanked," she murmured, devoutly. "Oh, Berkely dear, I knew all along that she was worse than you tried to make me think. It's been a sore trial to me, for she's my strength and hope."

Berkely saw the flutter of Miss Waters' dress coming down stairs, and taking his aunt's hand in his, said, earnestly:

"Remember what we owe this woman; Dr. Windell himself declares that her care has been invaluable, and how little claim we have upon her for all she has done."

Charlotte Waters had not spent nine days in a sick-room without taking the impression on her face of something she had felt and endured; she was very pale, and as much subdued as it was possible for so keen and buoyant a face as hers to become; but now there was a pleasant beam in her eye, and a consciousness of the good news that had gladdened the household, in every glance.

"Well, good people," she began, "I hope you feel as happy as I do."

Mrs. Morrison arose and cast herself upon her breast.

"The Lord reward you as you deserve; and I can ask no more for you," she said, amid a shower of tears.

Whereupon the volunteer nurse, offering no disclaimer, sate down and joined her in a hearty cry.

Berkely left them thus sensibly employed, and went out to give a look at the progress of things in Myer's Lane with a lightened heart, and a much higher idea of the value of such mundane employments than he had had for weeks past. Fear and despair were no longer guests in Burleigh Place, but quiet and watching were still the reigning powers. The young ladies had not taken advantage of the doctor's permission for them to return, but Nelly wrote daily to Berkely, begging bulletins of Bess's state, and giving in return but sad accounts of Juliet's fortitude.

"It is dreadfully dull here," she admitted, "and poor Juliet seems to take but little notice of our presence; but Larry, who hates all such horrors as funerals and visits of condolence, actually demands our stay, to keep him in his senses, he says, in such an undertaker's shop as the drawing-room has become with crape and closed blinds."

Katie's correspondence was limited—one letter of proper report to her mother, and two prettily worded epistles to Miss Waters, thanking her sweetly for her undeserved devotion to the house of Morrison, being in all respects models of style and composition. It happened that Mr. Joe Waters lingered in New York long after his brother was buried, and as his more brief and less studied letters showed, was in a quandary about his brother's affairs—there being no will, and any amount of outstanding business.

Charlotte mentioned the receipt of these epistles to Berkely, but did not enlarge on their contents beyond a sigh or a shake of the head over John's shortsightedness, and that poor helpless child of his.

One morning, when Bess was so strong as to be able to sit up among pillows, the family resumed their old order of meals, and all assembled at breakfast.

"Another week, and I hope it will be home once more," said Mrs. Morrison, looking round joyfully. "Bess will be brought down, and the girls will be back from New York, and"——

"And I shall return to my place," said Charlotte Waters. "Ah well, it's changes, you know, nothing but changes in life, though mine have been pleasant ones mostly, so I don't complain."

As she spoke, Jenny put a letter in her hand, and glancing at its address, she said:

"From Joe; well, I expected *him*, rather than a letter I'll read it, with your permission."

"Berkely, when did you write to Nell?" asked his aunt. "I think Larry should consider that we too have had our troubles, and let the girls come home again. It's four weeks to-night since they started."

"Joe will be home to-night," said his sister. "Mr. Morrison will be able to attend to the business, it seems. There are no claims against the property from relatives, and he has collected the papers of the firm, and all that."

She spoke in a hesitating, annoyed sort of tone, and leant her head upon her hand thoughtfully awhile. Then she re-read the letter, and after a moment's cogitation, folded it and put it in her pocket. Her breakfast, after that, lay neglected on her plate, and she swallowed her coffee without a word.

On his way out for the morning, Berkely encountered her in the lower hall.

"Come in here a moment," she said, opening the parlor door; and he followed her, rather wondering at the gravity of her face and manner.

"I haven't got a particle of policy about me, Mr. Morrison, so I must come to the point without introduction. Is your cousin Lawrence a good, true man?"

"I scarcely understand your use of the terms," began Berkely, rather confused by the sudden catechism. "Do you mean"——

"I humbly trust I may be mistaken," she went on, without noticing his reluctance; "but I acknowledge that I measured his as a selfish, shallow nature, and pitied our poor little girl in being won by that dangerous face of his."

Still Berkely paused, and irresolutely studied the stitching of his glove, with a flushed and changing face.

In his heart of hearts he despised Larry Morrison, and being conscious of one great motive of bitterness against him, his large soul revolted at the idea of sitting in judgment on the man who had once been loved by Bess Saunders, and who had shamefully deceived her.

"There," he said at last, giving up the effort to speak, advisedly, "I needn't attempt to speak dispassionately, and I have no right to speak at all, of Lawrence Morrison. I don't like the man, Miss Waters, and you're too generous, I know, to require me to condemn him."

"He's your cousin, Mr. Morrison, and his wife is my dead brother's child. We are both interested, and may speak freely, I

think; and I say, it was a sad day for her when they met. I hope to Heaven I am wrong in feeling this as I do."

"Has anything been done or said by him to make you think so?" asked Berkely, slowly.

Charlotte took the letter from her pocket and rubbed her nose irascibly with it.

"You know John Waters died intestate, with a large business, into which he had just taken Lawrence as partner, owing to this matrimonial connection. Your cousin had been a capital book-keeper, but possessed no practical knowledge of the trade, and my brother Joe, whose business is of the same order, offered to call in the accounts and see that everything was arranged, as the nearest relative of the orphan, and to prevent its going into litigation through some inadvertence; but Lawrence, after securing himself from every family claim, by getting Joe to write up the genealogy, and go here and there inquiring into the affair, coolly tells him that there is so little to arrange that there is no need to trouble him, and pooh-poohs the idea of there being any considerable property to be secured to Juliet in her own name. Juliet has nothing to say, but to glance timidly at her lord, when the matter is mentioned to her; and so Joe, who is the last man to insist on a right, however keenly he feels it, has nothing for it but to come home, after being of infinite service to his amiable nephew in the way of silencing any outside interference with that young gentleman's plans."

"Mrs. Morrison, then, trusts implicitly to his decisions?" asked Berkely, reflecting her doubts in his own face.

"Mrs. Morrison does not assert herself, and has been too long used to tenderness to suspect double-dealing."

"Are you going to do anything in the matter, or is there anything you can do?" asked Berkely, after a pause.

"I can go to New York and have a talk with this cousin of yours, and I can, and inevitably will, make him my enemy by that conversation, and cut off all hope of association or sympathy with my brother's child in her hour of need. Her hour of need, Mr. Morrison, I say, for as we both live and stand here, that time will come to her as truly as she lives to meet it."

"So you think it wiser to remain quiescent, and trust to time to show you what is for the best?"

"Yes, if you give that name to Joe; I'm going to wait for him, and that pretty bright little cousin of yours—not the handsome Madonna one, you understand—and that is why I trouble you now, Mr. Morrison. Am I right in thinking she and her mother carry the family heart between them?"

"The family heart?" repeated Berkely, rather confused at this unceremonious dealing with the sentiments of his relatives.

"The feeling, you know," continued Miss Waters, imperturbably; "I don't accuse that fine looking dragon, Lawrence, of any such weakness, and the elder sister is too placid; Nelly is not so handsome, but she's truer, or at least it seems so to me; am I right?"

"I like my cousin Nell best," said Berkely; "and so it's only natural that I should agree with you."

"She's an observer, and will be able to tell me something I may want to know. Is she suspicious?"

"No; she's a dear frank girl, and it would be wrong to deceive her; the more so, as it is her brother's faults you wish her to discover."

"I want her to help me in protecting her poor sister-in-law against the thoughtless waste of her brother, who in his few weeks' adminstration of his father-in-law's business, has discovered the abilities of a luxurious spendthrift."

Berkely considered awhile, and then brightened up a little:

"That homestead, her father's wedding gift, is in her her own name, I have heard; it must be a valuable property, and if the worst fears for her future be realized, she has that dependence."

"True," said Charlotte, slowly, "that's something; but it's a mere nothing, to the work of twenty long years that will be sown broadcast among this young gentleman's wild oats."

"You're looking at the dark side now," said Berkely, cheerfully; "let us hope all these are groundless fears, and that Larry will astonish us all by his energy and discretion."

Charlotte coughed doubtfully, but said no more, and Berkely held out his hand.

"Thank you for your confidence, and be assured if there is anything I can do in an honorable, manly way, I shall be as ready as you could wish." Saying this, he went out, and Miss Waters took to pacing the room awhile, preparatory to going up to her patient.

CHAPTER XX.

NELL'S SENTIMENTS.

It was in the warm, bright days that sometimes glance like sunbeams among the grey clouds of February, that the Morrisons gathered together a full family circle once more. Charlotte Waters, no longer resident attendant, for she had been home for nearly a fortnight, was making one of her regular visits, and stopping for tea. The windows were bright with the glancing winter's sun, the shutters were opened, and the old cheerful air seemed come again to the house of Morrison.

Katie and Nellie, in their character of consolers, had contrived to invest themselves with an entirely new wardrobe, in which a keen observer might detect a delicate shade of mourning, proportionate to the grief they might be supposed to feel for the loss of a man whose living face they had never seen. But, as Katie said, "It was proper under the circumstances, and Larry had behaved very generously; besides, it was decidedly becoming to her style, and Nelly had made no objections."

This explanation was demanded by the blankness of their matter-of-fact mother's countenance when her daughters' garments first met her eye.

"What's come over ye, that you've took to the black clothes?" she asked, to her elder daughter's intense annoyance; and despite all the light thrown upon it by Katie's philosophy, she continued to marvel at the circumstance for many a day.

In an easy-chair by the fire sat Bess, now fully recovered, ac-

cording to her own account, but looking sadly changed since the night of the tableaux party. Her wadded gown hung loosely round her shrunken form, and the glory of her head was departed; a close cap took the place of the abundant hair that had so adorned it, making her white face and gleaming eyes almost painfully unrelieved and peculiar looking. Her manner was subdued and listless, her whole system had received a terrible shock in the long illness that had so nearly proved fatal. Uncle Terry sate near her, with a fine sense of enjoyment in the changed state of things, expressed in his wrinkled old face. Uncle Terry was really getting old, and these trying times had told on him; comfort was an essential now to his existence, and its interruption and the weary days of suspense had had their effect in making the lines deeper that seamed and plowed his aged face.

Miss Waters was now deeply draped in black for the loss of her brother; for the month she had remained in Burleigh Place she had made no change in her attire, but with that odd independence that distinguished her, compelled the forms of society to await her pleasure. As soon as Bess was fully recovered, and could be left to her aunt's care, she went as abruptly as she came, and when she next appeared, it was in sweeping weeds, that in outward show did honor to her brother's memory.

"One thing really distresses me, dear Miss Waters," said Bess, summing up her case in answer to her friend's inquiries: "I am positively so lazy, that it is painful for me to hold a bit of work in my hand, and as to stirring around as I used to, it seems as if I never should be able to do so again."

"But look at her," said Nelly, sadly; "doesn't it seem fearful that Heaven should claim such a sacrifice as a woman's hair?"

Katie answered her sister's appeal by declaring that it wasn't the hair, but the cap that made Bess hideous.

"No one would believe it, that ever had seen her before," she said. "She used to be by far the most artistic person I ever saw, about such things, and I should have named her as admirably calculated by taste to remedy such a blow; but look at her now."

"No, no," said Bess, "don't look at me; I am a perfect fool, and it tries me to be stared at."

"I should think it might by four such critical eyes as your cousins'; but there's this advantage about a shaved head, it don't remain bare long," said Charlotte Waters, coming to the rescue.

"That's true," said Katie, amiably, "I never thought of that; but then I never knew any one who had an experience in that way."

"There was Samson, you know," suggested Nell; "or was it his eyes that he lost?"

"Well, Nellie," said her mother severely, "it would become you to take a Bible in your hand; and indeed, I'm ashamed of your ignorance, this day."

"I'm not ignorant, mother, for I'm positive it was either one thing or another. Here's Cousin Berkely coming up the steps, and I'll appeal to him."

"Well, indeed, I shall feel disgraced if you do, Nellie," said her indignant parent. "His father was a God-fearing man, and brought his son up to study the Scriptures, as I have tried to do with mine; but they have done me little credit, I'm sorry to say."

"How was it about Samson, Bess?" whispered Nellie, as Berkely entered the parlor and came up to the invalid's chair.

"Much better and stronger," answered Bess, cheerfully, in answer to his inquiries; and as he turned toward Miss Waters, she said: "Delilah cut off his hair, and the Philistines put out his eyes after they took him prisoner."

"Now," cried Nell, triumphantly, "I knew I was right; and here was mother getting up quite a lament over my degenerate ignorance."

"You said you didn't know which of the afflictions befell him, when it was both; so, really, I don't see that you have any reason to rejoice," said Katie.

"I positively don't think one feels encouraged in piety, anyhow," said Nell, despondingly; "for when I was in New York, I read nothing but religious works aloud to Juliet, and

here I am accused of disgracing my training almost as soon as I get home."

"Did the poor child seem resigned at all?" asked Miss Waters, her face expressing her interest in her subject. "You know that her father was all in all to her for years, and marriage is but a new tie in comparison."

Nell's bright face grew serious, as she stopped to consider a moment before speaking.

"I can scarcely say that she is," she began, when Katie interrupted her.

"Poor Juliet is not strong, and her physical strength suffered as well as her mind in the fright of the announcement. Larry proposes traveling in a month or two, which will be all she needs, I think."

Miss Waters sighed and sank back in her chair, as Katie, giving her sister a slight but meaning glance, went up to get some engravings with which she had promised to charm Uncle Terry.

"It's a completely illustrated 'Tam O'Shanter,' Bess," said the old man, "and will be a treat to you too. I must go up and get my glasses, that I may be able to see them clearly."

Mrs. Morrison rose. "I'll have to give Ellen O'Toole a look about tea. Is there anything you would fancy, Bess, darling?" she asked.

"Another slice of toast, aunt, please," said Bess, who, finding her aunt had a fancy for browning bread, was fast becoming a martyr to that dish.

Miss Waters glanced from Nell to Bess, and from Bess to Berkely, as the door closed.

"Do you think Juliet is happy, Nelly?" she asked, bluntly.

As bluntly Nelly answered her:

"No; and I am very sorry for it. Larry has been accustome to be entertained by women of high spirits, and Juliet, on the contrary, looks to him for every glimpse of life that animates her; so he is bored, and she dissatisfied—and that is the trouble, I think."

"It's early days with them to begin to weary of each other," said Charlotte, bitterly.

"Don't misunderstand me; I don't say they are wearied of each other, but I have never known anything of married life, except from books, and they don't seem to be like that sort of thing. I can't explain it, but it isn't agreeable at all."

Berkely looked out of the window, and Bess kept her eyes resolutely fixed on the floor. Charlotte Waters and Nell had the conversation all to themselves.

"So you think they are both in fault, Nelly. Can you see any hope of time correcting Juliet's mind, or will the breach wear wider?"

Nelly fidgeted a little.

"Why it isn't an agreeable thing to find fault with one's brother, and Larry is a fine fellow, and all that; but I don't look on death and trouble as likely to bring out his best qualities; he isn't sympathetic or likely to help one in bearing burdens; he rather needs keeping up himself, if you can understand."

"Then poor Juliet has met this blow single-handed," said her aunt, with an expression that was not flattering to the unfolding character of her nephew. Nelly was looking at a little fire-screen she held in her hand, and thus employed, pursued the subject:

"Yes; and a very, very sad sight it was to see her bowed to the earth by it; I had no idea of her nature till then. She seemed so smooth and smiling all the time she was here, I could form no idea of the almost volcanic passion of grief or despair she could fall into; it was terrible."

"Poor girl, poor girl!" muttered Miss Waters to herself.

Berkely looked over at Nell with an interest and admiration he thought her light nature incapable of exciting. She still twirled the screen round, and looked sadly at its gay figures, as if tracing the saddened story of the young bride. Katie returned with the pictures and Uncle Terry, and the next moment the tea-bell summoned them to leave the discussion of "Tam O'Shanter" till after supper.

It had become so difficult a matter to produce a meal in the house of Morrison, that the present occasion found Mrs. Morrison, Ellen O'Toole, and Jenny Brackett all at daggers drawn—on the subject of stewed oysters. As Bess arose to go into the dining-room, Berkely offered his arm, which she was fain to accept in her altered, trembling state. When she reached the table, Ellen rushed to draw out a chair for her, and lodged a complaint in her ear in a loud whisper, meantime.

"Och, Miss, will ye iver be able to look to things, an' jist save us all from ruin! Yer aunt has nearly druv the wit out ov me this day, wid sthewing the oysters in milk that's on the turn."

"Ellen," cried Mrs. Morrison, wrathfully, "walk away into your kitchen, and don't fash Miss Saunders with your nonsense." But after she had gone out of hearing, she imparted to the company, with many sighs, that "she was just a trying heart-break, and was wearing the flesh off her bones."

"Never mind, aunt, I'll soon be able to begin again, and let you have a rest after your long, long task."

"Oh, if you only were, dear, it would be a glad day for us all, for what with Jenny and Ellen and the butcher, I believe I am three shades greyer than I was before Christmas."

"Pray don't talk of beginning house-keeping yet, Bess," said Charlotte Waters, "because I came here to ask a favor, and I really will not be put down."

"Well, then, Miss Waters, if there's any one who should have their say, it's yourself," said Mrs. Morrison. "We'd have had neither house nor house-keeper, if it hadn't been for your devotion, and the mercy of heaven together."

"This is what I want to say; I am living alone in that great house of ours, for my brother Joe is really nobody in his busy time, which is three-fourths of the year, and I want Miss Elizabeth Saunders to come and stay a fortnight with me, and make up her caps."

The whole family looked blankly at one another, and then blankly at Miss Waters.

"Why, Charlotte, how can you?" cried Katie. "We've but

iust got back, and Bess is having a levee of inquirers after her health every day, and mother would go distracted without her, and "——

"And there's a great deal to be done when she's able to do it," put in Uncle Terry; "but until she is, it will be well for her to have a change. Go, Bess dear, it will do you good."

"Yes," said Bess, slowly; "I'm very much obliged to you for the true kindness that prompts you to have a stupid invalid on your hands, and I'll go with real pleasure."

Berkely glanced approvingly at her as she said this.

"You are right," he said; "it will be the best thing for us all; we shall have you back so much brighter for the change, and aunt will be beguiled into going out every day for the purpose of seeing you."

"And I'll keep house," said Nelly, determinedly.

"Heaven preserve us, Peggy, do you hear that?" cried Uncle Terry, brightening up at the sound of Nell's positive tone. "She'll keep house, and we'll see a flock of white crows."

"Now that's shameful, but I don't mind it," said Nelly, pleasantly; "for I'm convinced that I need to begin some time, the sooner the better. And to prove my sincerity, I'm going to make out a little list of directions at Bess's dictation this very evening."

And although they laughed heartily at the industrious vein so newly developed in the avowed enemy to exertion, she held to her resolution, and brought a little blank-book duly headed, "Housekeeper's Notes," to take directions from Bess on the subject.

Half laughing as she did so, Bess imparted to her the secrets of kitchen economy, and Nelly, not tired with this, went so far as to offer to assist in the packing of her dresses for the visit to Miss Waters.

"Which reminds me," said Charlotte, "that I must take flight, and prepare Joe for the pleasure. You'll not expect to be entertained in our dull household as you are happy enough to have the ability to be here, Miss Saunders. You know, my brother, when he is most charmed with people, has an appear-

ance of being thoroughly frightened, which is rather uncomfortable."

"Why, how can you say so, Charlotte," cried Katie, in a tone of gentle dissent. "I'm sure we have always found him exceedingly happy in his character as host."

"I'll tell him you said so, which will make him perfectly helpless with delight," said Charlotte, nodding knowingly as she tied on her bonnet. "And now, Mr. Berkely Morrison, I'll trouble you to put on your hat and cloak, and give me your arm and company to West Park."

An hour later, Bess was lying on the lounge in her own room, while Nelly folded and laid her "things" in a small trunk at her side, and talked merrily to her about the oddness of going up to West Park to pay her a visit.

"And it will be capital fun to watch Katie pursue her courtship, too, won't it, Bess?" she concluded.

"Oh, Nelly," said Bess, sitting upright, and leaning forward earnestly, "do you think that Katy really cares for him?"

Nelly turned round with a lace jacket in her hands, and slowly smoothed out the frills with her fingers as she spoke.

"That isn't the word exactly, Bess; she cares for the establishment up at West Park, for the pictures, the library, the silver, and the etceteras; but for Mr. Waters, the personater of Conrad, she has an unmitigated contempt."

"I cannot see how she can separate the possessor from his possessions," said Bess, falling back wearily. "Isn't it very odd, Nelly?"

"It would be odd to you, Bess," said Nelly, gravely pausing a while in her occupation, "because you are so downright in your honesty, but don't fear for Katie, or pity Charlotte's 'Joe.' He will be very happy and proud, and all that; Katie will make him believe it has been the object of his life to win her, and he'll feel quite triumphant when she brings him to the point."

"Then she is to be pitied if she does not love him," said Bess; "nothing can repay her for that."

"Oh, but she won't need love, you know; she'll do without that; it's sort of nonsense, Bess, after all. But this is in confi-

dence; mother couldn't understand this new style of things; she's true to the old order, and would have her venerable hair on end at the thought."

Bess returned her look, and answered listlessly:

"Yes; that's true—that's true."

"And here you are all complete, and so good-night and God bless you, Bess, and don't worry about things here, for you'll see a good deal of Kate and mother; and I'll keep Uncle Terry for company and advice."

Nelly closed the bureau drawers, and gathered up the loose articles and put them away. Then she stooped and kissed her cousin, and took her bright cheery face away out of the door. Before she closed it, however, she thrust it in again, laughing.

"What disposition shall I make of Berkely, Bess?" she asked. "O, Bess, Bess, there's but one thought there! Devotion enough for one of Froissart's heroes or Foque's Knights," and, without waiting for a reply, she laughed again and hurried away.

When Nelly entered their joint apartment, she found her sister seated before the toilet glass, combing out her long beautiful hair.

"Where have you been stopping, Nell?" she said, pettishly. "What is the matter with you and Bess? I declare, it's enough to startle an unexplosive person like me to find people who so suddenly make an irruption of friendship."

"I like Bess," said Nelly, shortly.

"Really," said Katie, laughing, "one would scarcely suspect you of such a feeling for your own cousin."

"And I'm grateful to her, though I don't think I have depth enough to measure her nature," continued Nelly, thoughtfully.

"Pshaw!" interrupted Katie, impatiently; "let mother prose away in that vein, Nell. I'm heartily bored with hearing it."

"Katie," said Nelly, coming close to the table, and leaning over it so as to observe the reflection of her sister's face in the glass, "you know how Bess loves her jewels? well, she has sold them I saw the receipt; it fell from her pocket when she was packing up for us to go to New York; and I read it before I could understand its meaning."

"What did she do that for?" asked Katie, dropping her brush and gazing incredulously in her sister's face.

"I should not like to be the one to ask her," said Nell; "but it was not for herself; she has positively denied herself everything in the way of dress this winter. Where did all the week's elegance come from, when Larry was here? He remarked it himself, you know; and the fittings up and furniture. I tell you, Katie, she's a noble girl, and we owe her everything."

"I, for one, shall be heartily glad to shake off the debt, fancied or real," returned Katie. "She has fine points, no doubt, but she's not properly balanced, and gives one a most uncomfortable feeling of uncertainty as to what she'll do next, sometimes. Heigh-ho! When I'm settled in my own way, I'll be able to appreciate her, from a distance, better, no doubt, than I do now."

"Sit down here and do your hair, for it's getting late."

CHAPTER XXI.

KATIE'S COURTSHIP.

Bess went to the Waters' next day, and, after she was gone, Mrs. Morrison, although she consented to her departure, gave herself up to despair, and the house to destruction.

"There she goes, Berkely," she said, as the family returned to the dining-room, "and if there's a whole thing left in the place when she comes back, it is more than I look for. Nell there, knows no more about keeping things in order than the child unborn; and I know there'll be sad doings with Ellen and Jenny when she guides the helm."

To prove her mother a false prophet, poor Nelly, to do her justice, left no effort untried, and, had it not been for a baleful desire to experiment that possessed her, would have proved tolerably successful. This same faculty, besides being of a wasteful

nature, filled the house with a smell of burnt cake, and often rendered the family dinner desertless ; but, as Nelly wore a large white linen apron constantly, and had a burn on one wrist and a cut in the thumb, Katie looked on her as a miracle of housewifely endurance and skill.

Katie allowed one day to pass before she went up to West Park to ask after her cousin, but, on the second, she appeared in full dress before her mother, and avowed her intention of calling there.

"Well, now, but I'm glad of that, Katie," cried her mother, approvingly ; "it's just what I would have asked you to do myself, and I'm happy that you thought of it."

"Yes," said Katie ; "and so I think as Nelly is busy, I had best go alone, and give poor Bess your messages ; she'll be sure to feel home-sick, if I don't."

Commending this resolution of her daughter's most highly, Mrs. Morrison enjoined upon her to tell Bess so much that it would have taken more than a half-dozen visits to obey her injunctions in a proper manner. Katie listened, or appeared to listen, demurely smoothing down meantime, as she did so, the folds of her dress, and arranging her mantle becomingly through the aid of her mother's glass.

"And be sure that you ask Miss Waters about her appetite," she enjoined, in conclusion, "for you see, unless a body eats, a body can't hope to gain strength."

The house in West Park was still closed and gloomy looking outside, but nothing could be brighter and richer than the cheerful luxury of the library, where, in a pile of cushions, Katie found her cousin lying, not looking much the better for her change.

Bess held an open book in her weary hand, and Charlotte was busy sewing : both laid aside their occupation and gladly welcomed her.

"And how is aunt?" cried Bess, her face flushing with pleasure. "It really seems as if I had been absent for months instead of a day and a half."

"Mother will come up to-morrow, and she hopes to see you looking quite robust," answered Katie, thus condensing into so many words her mother's dozen chapters of tender charges and inquiries. "Bess has no excuse for remaining an invalid in this delightfully invigorating atmosphere. Why can't *we* have an open hearth and a roaring wood fire?—those tall Gothic andirons look quite baronial."

"That's Joe's device, Katie," said Charlotte; "he is an adorer of La Motte Fouque, and though anything but a knightly figure himself, is almost as chivalric as Don Quixote."

"How charming to find such qualities in this dull, work-day world, in which one would think all the noble sentiments extinct!" exclaimed Katie, with enthusiasm.

Charlotte laughed heartily. "Why, to tell you the truth," she said, "I look upon Joe's romance as the funniest thing in life, because I can't tell which he's most interested in, the rise and fall of domestic goods or the orders of knighthood and etiquette of tournaments."

"Well, I must confess to admiring the nature that, despite the ardor and cares of business, retains the poetry of the heart untouched by the prices current. Our Cousin Berkely, though one of the finest fellows living, is lamentably common-place. I think it must have been his training in that hard school abroad. His father died before he was able to assume the responsibility of head of the firm, and yet he had to do it or lose everything. Poor fellow! one can't blame him for his want of sentiment."

"I'm old enough to say I love your Cousin Berkely heartily," said Charlotte, with ardor. "He's eminently sensible and thoughtful about others, if that's being prosy. You know I can speak from facts, for he and I were allies for nearly six weeks, and I never desire a more efficient one."

"I have given up attempting to thank Mr. Morrison in words," said Bess, with downcast eyes, and cheeks in whose pallor the faint color dawned at her words; "but no one has greater reason to be conscious of another's goodness than I of his."

"Here's Brother Joe," announced Charlotte, as a heavy foot

echoed on the stairs ; he will be proud to think what I term his absurdities are so nobly defended by his Medora. Ha, ha, ha ! shall I ever forget the Tupman-like figure the dear fellow cut at your feet !"

Mr. Waters entered, and blushed scarlet with pleasure at the sight of his sister's visitor.

"Miss Morrison," he exclaimed ; "charmed to see you, I'm sure. Hope you find Miss Saunders looking pretty well. Quite apropos, to see you. Just heard from your brother"——

"From Larry," said Katie, with interest ; "and how is he and how is Juliet ?"

Mr. Waters considered, as he searched his pockets for the letter.

"I can scarcely say whether he mentions Juliet's name or not ; let me see : ah, here it is. 'Orphan's court'—'confounded fees'—'legal extortion'—'worthless property'—oh, yes, here it is. 'So as Juliet is restless here, she may as well go South before the summer heat renders traveling intolerable. We will leave here in March, and if, as I hope, there be no delay in closing up the Southern arrangements, will pass your way, returning, in early May.'"

"Closing up the Southern business—what does the man mean ?" cried Charlotte, sharply.

Mr. Waters gave his sister a troubled look.

"He's going to close up the firm. I can't explain it, so don't ask me," he said.

"Is the man demented," began Charlotte, but remembering his sister's presence, she restrained herself, and added, in a milder tone : "it is such a prosperous business, and such a reliable connection."

Katie looked discreetly concerned, but ventured no remark. Bess scarcely seemed to hear what was being said, and after an awkward moment or two, their hostess rallied.

"Put away your letter, Joe," she said, "and be agreeable till tea time. Miss Morrison has just been declaring in favor of the days of lance and spear, so reward her sympathy with your tastes by showing her your illustrated 'Crusade.'"

Mr. Waters obeyed with alacrity ; and pocketing the letter, drew towards the ladies a book rest, on which to display the series of fine engravings, over which his heart expanded in joy to the extinction even of his constitutional embarrassment.

Katie was prevailed upon to remain to tea, by her warm-hearted hostess, and as Bess watched her from her sofa, half hidden in the shadow of the silk-lined doors of the library, looking into book after book of old romance, she thought of Nelly's prophecy, and felt it was in progress to be fulfilled.

Charlotte and she talked together about Juliet's coming back again so changed from her last visit, and surmised about the possible stay with the family before going further South. They had the subject all to themselves, for Mr. Waters and his companion were occupied in the realm of fancy, from which they only emerged at Katie's declaration that it was late, she knew it was, and what a dreadful person Mr. Waters was to beguile her out of so many hours ; quite an enchanter, she declared.

It was his proud privilege to blush delightedly at this assurance, and walk away with her when she had put on her cloak and furs, in a state of rapturous pride.

Miss Waters, after they had departed, coughed a good deal, as if trying to swallow something not very palatable, sighed once or twice, shook her head, and finally remarked :

"Of all the useless things under the sun, interference with a man's fancies is the most useless, if you don't mean to strengthen them."

To this, Bess offering no reply, she became a little irrascible, and pushed a great cat from a comfortable spot on a rug before the fire, as she replaced the chairs and stool that were disarranged in the evening.

Presently good humor triumphed in her pleasant face, and she burst into a hearty fit of laughing.

"Your pretty cousin did penance to-night, Bess," she said, "for I know she looks on those old books as a lot of rubbish and trumpery, and was fearfully bored with them."

"Katie has the rare talent of being agreeable when it's

necessary, no matter how she feels. I have often envied her that charm, without being able to emulate her."

Charlotte, who seemed entirely indemnified for Katie's designs on her brother by the contemplation of the trouble she was at in charming him, gave herself up to merriment, and went to bed in high good humor.

Then Bess began to suspect, what every day became surer, Katie's interest in her was a cover for winning a man whose native shyness would prevent him from ever becoming a suitor, and being a girl of an almost painfully keen sense of honor and correctness, to stay longer at the Waters' became impossible.

"I am so strong, it seems like nursing laziness, now," she said, one evening after Katie and her mother had departed under the care of the entranced Conrad, as Nelly called him. "So, my dear friend, as I feel I am really needed there and shall be happier when at work, I'll return home to-morrow."

"You shan't stir until your fortnight's up," said Charlotte, flatly; "if you speak of it, I shall think you moped with our dullness."

But Bess did speak of it and would not be silenced. Almost every day of the ten she had spent in West Park, Katie had passed part of it there, too, sometimes with Nelly, sometimes with Mrs. Morrison, but always at the hours when Mr. Waters' business over, he would be at her service. Not content with sharing his passion for knight-errantry, she had discovered his leaning towards bronzes, and avowed such a love for the figures in that metal, that he had gone so far as to take her to an exhibition and sale of articles of virtu, and under her direction bought so largely, that Charlotte was dismayed and non-plussed by the innumerable little black figures to be placed and disposed of over the house.

Berkely had been in New York, and was there still; and "Our cousin being away, would Mr. Waters be good enough to do thus and so," was another rivet in the chain. He carried letters, brought parcels, and if his own gratified face could be taken in evidence, never had been so happy before; but Charlotte knitted her brows and shook her head, at times, and so Bess had

not been able to endure the thought of aiding by her presence this odd style of wooing.

Miss Waters endeavored to keep her in West Park, at least until the beginning of the week, but on Thursday morning, Bess resolutely dressed herself in walking gear and went back to Burleigh Place, in the corner of the capacious family coach.

"I'm truly mortified at your decision, and your people will think I maltreated you, Bess," said Charlotte. "You must let me run up and say a word in explanation before you leave the carriage, or they'll think we're both crazy."

"They will be glad to have me back, and grateful to you for making me so much stronger. My dear aunt feels how much we owe you as sensibly as I do," said Bess, getting out, and running almost briskly up the old steps, in pleasure at being home again.

Jenny Brackett, in answering the bell, fell back in surprise, and recovering herself, gave way to the record of a flood of disasters, of which broken china, a hole in the new "ketching oil-cloth," and "yer nice market basket stoled out of the yard," were a few. This flood-tide of accidents was stemmed by Nelly rushing from the dining-room in her great apron and flowery state of hands, and embracing the returned with vigor.

"But we didn't expect you, and Katie's up dressing to go up and see you. Why did you come so soon?"

"There I told you, Bess; they think you're wild, and will blame me for your wildness. Nelly, I've implored her to stay with me in vain, as you see. She's an obdurate creature."

"She's a darling, and I am glad to get her back. Hold your tongue about the broken plates, and run up to mother's room and tell her, Jenny," she continued, to that officious damsel, who was waiting for a break in the conversation to repeat her tale of loss and damage.

"And now, having entered my protest against this desertion, and told my way of the story, I'll go back with the horses, for Joe is going to New York, and will want to be driven to the depot."

Miss Waters had scarcely gone, when Katie came down in

full dress, and started, in positive amazement, at the sight of Bess.

"What does this mean?" she asked, coldly; "is anything wrong?"

"I was well enough to come home, and so I came," said Bess, quietly. "I did not care to burden Miss Waters and interfere with her employments any longer than necessary."

Katie grew pale with anger, her lips trembled, and her eyes flashed.

"Bess Saunders, you know in your heart you left the Waters' to thwart me—you know you did, and I'll remember it as long as I live against you!" She came close to her cousin, and shook her hand in her face, utterly forgetting everything but the wrathful passion of the moment.

Bess made no reply; she drew back a little and grew a shade paler, but neither spoke to nor looked at her accuser.

"You've tried to poison that meddling old maid against me, and I have double work to do; but I'll do it, and be even with you, if it costs my life."

"Katie, Katie, are you mad? What are you saying, you spiteful creature!" cried Nelly, in an agony of distress, for she heard her mother's footsteps on the stairs outside.

"I'm saying what I mean, and what I want you and her to remember. She has tried to ruin my chance for a good home because Larry slighted her. You and mother are a pair of moles, and don't see what goes on about you; but I do, and, demure as she is, she did her best to drive poor Juliet crazy with jealousy while she was here."

"Katie Morrison," screamed Nelly, "hold your abominable tongue." But Bess never spoke at all.

"I've let her take her own way," the infuriated girl went on, "and never noticed her schemes to enchant Berkely, though I might have blown them all to the winds if I'd tried, and here she deliberately and coolly turns upon me and does her best to ruin every hope I have."

"Tell her it's not so; do, Bess—dear Bess, for my sake," urged Nelly, in tears.

"She is right," said Bess, in a cold, unnatural voice. "I did come home to prevent her going to Charlotte Waters with a pretended interest in me, and a design against her brother. I say design, Katie, because I think you truly dislike the man, and your desire to marry him is horrible in my eyes."

"Your eyes—your pure, innocent eyes, that envy a woman her rightful husband! I have shocked thee, have I?" said the other, tauntingly.

Her mother came in with an April full of delight and tears.

"Welcome home, darling—you're welcome home, a thousand times," she cried.

Bess rose and kissed her, as Katie swept out of the room.

"Why, what on earth ails you? You are as cold as the ice itself!" exclaimed her aunt. "You must be ill, dear. Nelly, what is it, any way?" and she turned to her daughter, demanding an explanation.

"It was Katie, mother; I'm perfectly disgusted with her; she behaved like a tigress, and—"

"What!" screamed her mother, in shrill surprise.

Bess got up in an instant, and caught Nelly's hand.

"Why, aunt, you must get used to my being nervous; Katie did not expect me back, and was startled at seeing me; the least sound is exciting to me now. I must learn to get over this weakness. Help me up stairs, Nell, dear."

"Well, as I came down, Ellen O'Toole stopped me for the keys of the linen closet, and, while I was searching my pocket for them, I thought I heard a wonderful flurry in here. Was it Katie, then? Well, she did well to go before I came in."

Bess went up into her own room, drawing Nelly after her, and closed the door.

"Nelly," she cried, in a breathless tone, "as you love your mother, and value her peace, don't let her know this. Whether I have wronged Katie or not, she thinks I have, which makes it so to her. I *know* she has wronged *me*, that makes it even; for the rest let us trust to time, but your mother must not suffer through our broils. Katie will marry and go away; but the old

home must be kept peaceful for my aunt's sake. Will you promise to help me in this, Nelly ?"

"Yes, I will, Bess ; and I'll try to be more like you in your thoughtful unselfishness."

"I'm not unselfish, Nell, I wish I were ; but I'm so worn out that I must have peace ; and when I want your mother to enjoy her dear old home, I know that I will be here with her."

"You are a better daughter to her than Katie or I have ever been, and she relies on you entirely. So she might, for I know she'll always be the same to you, even when you are married."

"I shall never be married, Nelly ; and Katie and you will come and see us and talk of old times, when these disagreements are all forgotten."

Bess said this cheerfully, as she kissed her cousin's cheek, and pushed her out of the room playfully, saying she must lie down for a little rest before dinner ; but when the door was closed, she forgot her need of it and paced the room, wringing her hands and weeping bitterly, saying :

"I have hidden the truth by crushing my heart to stifle it, and am accused of worse. Oh, why did I not die that dreadful night when I first saw your face, Berkely Morrison ?"

CHAPTER XXII.

KATIE WINS HER GAME.

THE day that began so threateningly, ended in the nearest approach to gayety they had known since the unhappy shock of Christmas times. Mrs. Morrison had allowed Bess an hour of rest as she supposed, and then assailed her with propositions relative to toast and tea ; but Bess roundly declared in favor of sleep as a rest, and was left alone till dinner, when Katie returned from a morning promenade in a decidedly improved temper,

and acknowledged to Nelly that it was much better not to take their mother into these disturbances, and that, execrable as Bess's conduct was, she had too much self-respect to resent it publicly.

"But wait, Nell," she said, as they went down to dinner together, "no one has a greater passion for appearance and position than Bess Saunders, and I'll make her feel mine when I gain it."

"You can never make Bess anything but what she means to be, Katie," said Nell, doggedly; "and she's a good, true girl. You've made me do her injustice many a time, but I'll do so no more, Katie Morrison!"

Instead of being displeased at her sister's allegiance to Bess, Katie merely laughed, and went humming an air into the dining-room. Bess was not there; she had not come down it seemed, and, waiting for the appearance of their mother and Uncle Terry, the girls took up their position at the window, and began a desultory conversation on the subject of spring dresses, on which theme there was a singular unanimity of feeling between them.

"Bess isn't in her room," said Mrs. Morrison, coming in.

Uncle Terry followed her.

"I'm in a great way to have a look at her," he said, "and thought maybe she was here."

"I am here, uncle," cried Bess, cheerfully, from the kitchen, and she came in so like her old self again that the whole family assembled, exclaimed at the transformation.

"It's my hair, aunt," explained Bess; "I have been having it made up in wigs. I've tried the rounds of caps of all styles, and find nothing that I think becoming, so I've taken to my cast off hair."

"Bess," cried Nell, heartily, "it's worth a fortune to see you look yourself again; is it not, mother?"

"Indeed and indeed it is," responded Mrs. Morrison; "thi ooks like old times, and happy times they were."

Even Katie smiled approvingly, and a semblance of harmony in which Uncle Terry and Mrs. Morrison at least rejoiced, reigned over all

The parlors were fully lighted that evening before the tea-bell

rang, and Bess, who had assumed her old place in the household, was just urging despatch to the lazy old Uncle Terry, when a hack brought Berkely up to the door, and a bound or two into the hall where he greeted and was greeted by his relatives as if he had been absent on an expedition to the North Pole.

The tea-table was a merry meeting that night, and Bess's restored beauty was a theme of delight. Berkely had seen Juliet and Larry, he said, and they were coming to make a little visit on their way to the South.

Juliet was looking better, and he argued much good from the expected change. He had taken a sort of interest in the affairs of the late Mr. Waters: that is, he had compromised with Larry for a portion of the stock, not seeming, to that gentleman, to promise much at public sale, and, retaining some of the old employees of the late firm, had started the old business again on a much humbler footing. It would require his presence in New York about one week in three, and a half-yearly visit to the South and West, but was not a thoroughly absorbing object, as business once had been to him—merely an investment.

Larry had done something to impress his cousin more favorably than he had ever done before, for Berkely spoke of him freely, and without the reluctance that had always marked his former mention of his name.

The door-bell rang as they were still gathered round the table, and Jenny brought in the announcement of company for the evening. Katie and Nell, who were in full dress, went out to receive them, and presently Bess and the rest of the family joined them.

Mr. and Mrs. Warren had stopped for the Daceys, and they had all come intent on driving away the lingering gloom that Bess's long illness had brought upon the house of Morrison. The present disposition of the family aided their endeavors, and soon the merry hum and ringing laugh of united voices sounded cheerily through the parlors. Another ring at the door, and Katie's placid face glowed at the visitor's name—Mr. Joseph Waters. As she stepped forward to meet him, she gave Nelly a look that said: "You see, I win," and from that moment

became so charmingly gay and amiable, that had the soft-hearted fellow not already been a captive, his doom were certain.

In the duetts of the evening, Katie bore no part—she sat in animated discussion with Mr. Waters, on the endless theme of chivalry, and so earnestly engaged were they in its merits, that the last guest departing found them still in eloquent undertone.

At last Mr. Joe arose and took a solemn and impressive leave of all the family. Nell being the last to receive his benediction, was so overcome the instant he was gone, that she was obliged to throw herself on a sofa in a paroxysm of laughter. Every one present guessed its cause, except her mother, who immediately proceeded to expostulate with her on her impropriety.

"What ails you that you act so, Nell?" she asked. "Mr. Waters is a good creature, though not very sharp; why should you break out, as if you had never been taught decency in your own house?"

But Katie could afford to forgive her.

"Mother," she said, calmly, "Mr. Waters wishes to see you to-morrow; he has deferred his visit to New York for that purpose"——

"To see me? Well he might have spoken to me to-night, for I suppose it's something about Juliet's coming here in the spring; they want her to stop with them, and must settle it with Bess."

Berkely stood ready to close the piano for Bess, who was putting away the scattered music. Mrs. Morrison had pushed back her easy-chair, and was shutting up her spectacle-case; Uncle Terry stood looking at the carpet, and Nell continued her laughter. Katie took in the whole group from her stand, with her hand on the door.

"Mr. Waters' business is of a personal nature, mother; he wishes to consult you on a nearer subject—that of our union. He has proposed to me to-night, and I have accepted him, conditional of course on your approval." As she said this, she cast a modest look of maidenly timidity on her parent, as if hoping to find her propitious to her young happiness, and retired.

Mrs. Morrison uttered a cry of amazement.

"Well of all that ever I heard!" she exclaimed, and sank back in her chair.

"Didn't you see the drift of the Corsair, Peggy?" asked Uncle Terry, laughing.

"What's that?" said his niece. "I saw nothing but a soft-looking man, the last I would ever have charged Katie with fancying. He's neither young nor handsome, and to tell you the truth, he has the look of a weak-minded creature to me. Oh, that I should live to see Katie make such a pick and choice."

Berkely, as family moderator, came to the rescue.

"Mr. Waters is a good fellow, aunt—not very attractive, perhaps, but reliable and respectable in every way. I think we should congratulate Cousin Katie on her"——

"Energy and perseverance," murmured his uncle, in an undertone.

"Choice," finished Berkely, ignoring the old gentleman's suggestion, and reproving him with an admonishing glance.

"I'll have to hear it again before I believe it," cried Mrs. Morrison, at length. "Nell, I warn you to give over that cackling laugh of yours; it's enough to drive a body wild, and I won't bear it."

But despite her mother's threat, and her uncle's affected displeasure, Nell continued to give way to her mirth, and declared that it was the funniest thing she ever heard of, and would be too much for her before all was over, she was afraid.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LITTLE BARNES.

THE next day Katie appeared in a new character among her family. She said little, but looked volumes of sweetness and delicate consciousness. Her manner was perfect, gentle, con-

siderate, and obliging towards Bess and Nelly, respectfully deferential towards her mother, and bashfully shy towards Berkely and Uncle Terry.

Nelly had so far recovered from her attack of the evening before, as only to explode in her handkerchief, and stifle her laughter in that manner, until Jenny announced "Mr. Waters' compliments, and could he speak with Mrs. Morrison," when she instantly retired from sight, in her own room, telling Bess, as she went, that if she only had the self-control to listen, it would be worth a life of trial to hear the unprompted promptings of the Corsair's devoted heart.

How Mr. Waters acquitted himself in this interview, no one but Mrs. Morrison ever knew; but so long a time elapsed before its conclusion, that Nell came out of her retirement to consult with Bess on the advisability of breaking in on their privacy, lest some evil had befallen them. Her cousin, who had to keep in mind Katie's bitterness of the day before, as a preventive to sharing Nelly's mirth, felt relieved when her aunt at last rang the parlor-bell, and instructed Jenny Brackett to call Miss Morrison. It was some time before that young lady could be found, and when at last she was discovered in sweet confusion in her mother's chamber, she obeyed the summons with such evident trembling and reluctance, that Uncle Terry and Nell made an afternoon of it up stairs in the old man's sanctum, whence their laughter resounded faintly on the offended ears below.

Mr. Waters had come in state in the family carriage, and as its wheels rolled away out of Burleigh Place, Mrs. Morrison summoned the family into the parlor.

It was well for Nelly that she had laughed her laugh out, for her mother seemed in no wise inclined to favor her conduct.

"I have seen Mr. Waters, as you know, this morning," she remarked, gravely, addressing herself to her uncle, but taking in the whole family in her glance. "He has formally asked for Katie's hand, and I'm led to think he will make her a happy woman. If I had been bent on setting her off and telling her accomplishments a thousand times over, I could not equal his

opinion of her ; it's perfectly wonderful to hear him, and as far as it goes, he's a rich and a well-sized man, though none too sharp-looking, I allow you."

Having thus declared in favor of her future son-in-law, Mrs. Morrison looked around her to take in the family views on the ame subject.

Uncle Terry became serious instantly.

"Katie," said he, "when a good, honest, well-to-do man chooses a portionless girl like you, he pays your beauty a compli ment, and renders a profound tribute to your mind and manners : but your heart and principles he takes on trust. It is in these he may be most easily deceived, and in these it is your duty to be true. Let him find at least what he expects—a devoted, considerate friend, worthy of the position he offers you, and willing to repay in kind, the sincerity and love of a good heart."

He took her in his arms and kissed her with some feeling, and Mrs. Morrison, struck for the first time that this new arrangement involved a parting in the family, burst into tears, without more ado.

But this was the first and last show of grief in Katie's wedding, everything else was as auspicious as could be imagined or hoped.

Berkely had asked the family to go with him to inspect the finished beauties of the Myers Lane improvements, and coming home in a capacious barouche next day for that purpose, found Charlotte making a ceremonious visit of congratulation, in com pany with her brother, and full of merry compliments about the double family connection. The jaunt was no sooner named, than she straightway proposed to join it, and her brother in no wise objecting, they took Katie and Mrs. Morrison with them, while Berkely, Uncle Terry and the young ladies made up the barouche party.

On the way, Nelly informed her companions that the wedding would unfortunately have to be rather a quiet one, as the recent death in the family demanded it should, but that they might

trust to Katie to make as much of it as possible under the circumstances.

"Larry is expected to return from the South about the beginning of May, and that will be in time to give Katie away, as the great day is to be the 10th," she concluded.

Nell was very full of her theme, and enjoyed it thoroughly. "There were to be six bridesmaids," she said, though they had only dared to hint three to their mother as yet; and Uncle Terry must engage to support them in everything, as it was important that the first family wedding should be perfect.

"You know that we can't call Larry's a wedding—it was a romantic runaway, without either sense or style, and as far as I can learn, not a single bridesmaid."

"Do you tell me so!" cried Uncle Terry, in affected horror.

"And so Katie's will be a church-wedding, and the Bishop will marry her," pursued Nell, shaking her muff at the old man. "That is the only proper way, don't you think so, Bess?"

"But I thought it was to be a quiet wedding, on account of the death of Mr. Waters' brother," said her cousin, in surprise; "I may be mistaken, but I think it will be very gay."

"Not gay, but effective, Bess," laughed Nelly. "We'll have no grand reception—just cards for the home in West Park. But Katie's church principles demand a church marriage, you know, so does the lace dress she has planned."

"Oh, this is what you two have devised, without regard to your mother's views," said Bess, smiling; "you'll have to meet somewhere half way between this and her more meagre ideas."

"Not if you three stand up for the right," said Nell, confidently. "But here we are at Myers Lane; you see, I recognize it, Berkely, by the draughts I've seen you make."

Berkely's plans for improvement, like the deeds of most young philanthropists, had out-run their original design, and appeared, when complete, far in advance of both time and place. The miserable shells of the tenement houses were divided into double dwellings, only connected by the large hall running through their centre. The wood-work was all grained and varnished as a shield against the smears that had appalled Berkely on the former paint

of the houses ; closets, with shelves and drawers, were constructed to aid the orderly bestowing away of the articles with which they had once seemed to pave the floor ; and every inducement that nicety and convenience could offer against discomfort and dirt was completely displayed in every dwelling.

"Who is going to live here? What kind of people, I mean, Berkely?" asked Nelly, considering the neighborhood with anything but an encouraged glance from the front windows of the corner house.

"Why, that's the question, Cousin Nell," said Berkely, beating his cane against his boot in a dissatisfied sort of way. "I thought I had the tenants in the former possessors of the soil, but they're too fine for that class, and so I've bought in those shanties in the small street at the back, and they are in process of patching up now."

Bess and Nelly walked over to the room in which a view of the new improvements could be obtained, and saw piles of mortar and carpenters' benches surrounding some dirty, defaced single houses, that were doorless and windowless, and very unpromising in every feature.

"So these front dwellings are not engaged at all?" said Bess.

"Oh, yes, the half of them are rented already," he returned. "I have found an agent in a good, reliable fellow, named Barnes, who was thrown from a building by the breaking of some scaffolding, and injured for life in the spine. I was fortunate in meeting him, for he thoroughly understands the people he deals with, and is, besides, an agreeable, whimsical sort of creature that one can't help liking."

The rest of the party had been wandering up and down the different dwellings under Mr. Waters' escort, and, returning, they all met in the hall of the house where Berkely and the girls were, and compared notes of admiration.

"They're as complete and convenient in every respect as if you had been an old housekeeper yourself, Berkely," said his aunt. "Charlotte and Katie have been complimenting you beyond everything."

"Do you see the poor little fellow coming towards us, aunt?"

asked Berkely, as a man, unnaturally short through a curve in his back, and slightly lame at the same time, came hobbling up the street.

The ladies looked in the indicated direction.

"Well, he is the real projector and arranger," continued Berkely, "although I must give him credit for some sensible advice on the subject of curtailing, that I didn't follow. This is Mr Barnes, ladies." The little man had by this time come up with them and paused respectfully, hat in hand. "I have been telling my aunt and cousins, Barnes, how invaluably serviceable you've been to such a novice as I am at all practical work."

The man had a sallow, sickly face, with large wistful eyes, but when he smiled, every feature brightened and became almost handsome. An ardent flush dyed his cheeks now, and he looked up with a shy sort of sharpness.

"Mr. Morrison never built or contracted with builders before, ladies, but business is business, whatever it's made of, and he needed nothing but a hint here and there about things that custom has made second nature to me."

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Morrison, who did not relish her nephew's abnegation in favor of a deformity like Barnes, "every one should do their part, and your's is not despised, you see; but, as you say, it would be a strange story if Mr. Morrison, after all his training in foreign parts, should have to come home to be instructed in business."

The little man nodded approvingly, and then turned to Berkely to answer some questions relative to the rear houses, while Mr. Waters assisted the ladies to the carriages.

"Mr. Morrison," said Charlotte, when they were fairly started on their way homeward, "I think I should really place in your hands the responsible task of providing me with a snug little old maid establishment."

They had exchanged Nell into the Waters coach, and taken Charlotte in her place.

Berkely looked astonished.

"Why, do you imagine that I mean to live in West Park after May?" she said, laughing. "No worse fate can befall a

house than to have two mistresses, so I'm going to abdicate at once in favor of the upholsterers and men in paper caps. Don't mention it to Joe yet, please ; he's a dear, soft-hearted fellow, and not at all practical, so he'll be quite cut up until I talk him into understanding it."

Not less affected at the prospect of separation herself, she took out her handkerchief and wiped the tears that commenced rolling down her nose at the idea.

"For you see," she explained, "I know his nature, and it's a nobler one than most people will take the trouble to find out. Poor dear fellow ! poor dear fellow !"

Uncle Terry echoed her sigh, and then joined in the laugh with which she followed it.

"These weddings are terrible things, Miss Waters," he said.

"You and I can afford to pity the misled victims ; can't we, Mr. Blake ?" she answered.

A regular family tea drinking took place at the Morrisons that night ; and Mr. Waters, whose bearing and genial manner were greatly improved since he had got the proposal off his mind, almost shone in conversation. There was but one mal-apropos feature in his newly developed loquacity : he used it chiefly to admire and praise Bess Saunders, a theme most distasteful to his bride elect.

"I used to think Charlotte almost beyond perfection," he acknowledged, as Bess left them to facilitate Ellen O'Toole's movements ; "but you never were pretty, you know, Charley ; and Miss Saunders is so useful, and so handsome and brilliant too—it seems a rare list of endowments, don't it, Mr. Blake ?"

"Faith, does it," assented Uncle Terry, tracing a line in the carpet with his boot-toe.

"While we had her up at our house she made it so cheerful that the change is dreary now, isn't it, Charley ?"

"It's very uncivil to tell *me* so, I'm sure, Joe, while I am wearing myself out to be pleasant to you," returned his sister, with affected displeasure.

He hastened to set matters right, with his broad, honest countenance looking as earnest as if lives were at stake

"But, Charley," he said, "I never could get on without you at all. You're a luxury I'm used to, and that has become indispensable; but Miss Saunders was a new delight."

Miss Waters glanced round and smothered a faint sigh in a pleasant laugh.

"Katie, you have an immense amount of heart to calculate on in this dear old brother of mine; he's inconveniently affectionate, as the world goes."

Katie, whatever her own views on the theme in question, simply smiled, with a sweetness that might mean anything one wished to interpret it.

At tea, Bess came to the rescue, and made the conversation of a character that Mr. Waters best shone in, and Uncle Terry glowed with delight as they all went back to the Crusades together. Katie hung breathlessly on the words of her lover, as he repeated snatches from old metrical romances, celebrating the feats of arms among the Saracen host, and supposed to be sung by greybeard minstrels in baronial halls.

"It was St. Louis, wasn't it, Joe, that sewed crosses on the shoulders of the cloaks he gave his courtiers at Easter? He presented them at night, and the gallants donned them in the morning to find themselves crusaders, you know, girls. Well," continued Charlotte, laughing, "I never put on a new garment after one of these conversations without examining it carefully, for fear Joe has determined that I shall start for the Holy Land, and marked my clothes."

These remarks—which to Mrs. Morrison "were just fair nonsense," as she afterwards acknowledged, "for what would make the man want to start his own sister off among haythens"—closed the long discourse on chivalry that would have warmed the heart of Don Quixote himself, and were almost as acceptable to Terrence Blake. The two visitors rolled away home in the green coach, and Katie went instantly to bed, in pursuance of her resolution to spare her complexion for that great event, the wedding.

There were two months to work in, but they began preparations at once. Katie displayed an energy and business tact that

was absolutely surprising in one so little given to exertion on previous occasions. Her ideas of a wardrobe were so extensive and expensive, that in the outstart her mother entered a breathless protest against such impossible grandeur.

"For where in all the world can we find the money to pay such bills, Katie?" she argued. "With all the saving we can do between this and then, three hundred dollars is the most that I can see, look where I will; and that is giving not one cent to Bess but Berkely's money for the housekeeping."

"I'll have it made a thousand before the week's over," said Katie, decidedly. "Larry Morrison has it, and shall give it up. Do you think he doesn't know that he should do something for his family now he has a chance? Of course he does, and I'll see that it's done."

"Why, as for Larry," began Mrs. Morrison, her face coloring at the thought, "what he has came through his wife, and it seems to me a hard thing to be beholden to her for your clothes, Katie. I'd rather do with what we can get decently, than try to gain more in such a way."

"Pshaw!" said her daughter, impatiently, "that's very well in the way of theory. The money's Larry's now, wherever it came from; and you know as well as I do, that when he lived with us, all we had gave way to him and his pleasure and advancement. Now it's in his power to repay in a slight degree the kindness lavished on him, and he shall do it."

"Ask it in your own name; mind, I warn you," said her mother, decidedly; "I'll have nothing to do with such works; if Larry, of his own free mind offered, there's no one would be more pleased than me; but I'll wait till then."

"That would be forever," said Katie, shortly. "I don't mean, for the sake of romantic scruples, to go into that old maid's family without the ability to hold my own with them."

She brushed past her mother and sister, and went into her own room, as they thought, to write to her brother; but Katie was no sluggard where her own interests were concerned, and so the petition had been dispatched to Larry the very day after her engagement with Mr. Waters.

The answer came towards the end of the week, and Katie triumphantly carried it into the room where Bess and her mother and sister sat working at some of the wedding gear.

"I have a letter from Larry, mother," she mentioned casually, for it was no part of her policy to let Bess know her manœuvres, "and he says they start to-morrow. They will only be here a day or two, and make their visit on their return." She half turned to go, but pausing, said: "Ah, yes, I had almost forgotten; Larry makes me a little present. A wedding gift, he says, and which may be more acceptable in the form of money. It's a check for five hundred—very kind and thoughtful, and will help out with the trousseau, as he thought."

Katie mentioned the sum slightingly, as if quite used to such bounties, but her eye looked out keenly and caught Bess's looks of amazement first, and then delight and pleasure.

"Aunt," she said, in a tone that trembled, do what she would to hide it, "I think that's truly kind in Larry; and I'm so glad that you'll have all you want, Katie!"

Katie laughed lightly. "All I want!" she echoed. "My ideas are too magnificent to be bounded by so small a sum, Bess, but it's very well in its way, you know—very well in its way."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TRAVELERS' RETURN.

Contrary to his avowed intention, Larry did not stop at his old home in his Southern route; he only made his expectant relations aware of the change in his plans, by writing to them from Savannah of his arrival there, and mentioning incidentally that he had concluded it best to have no breaks in the journey they could avoid, and had gone right onward.

The time had passed busily enough in Burleigh Place. Miss Waters had gone to live in what she called bachelor-style, in a

house of her own, near Dr. Wendell's, on Grove street, and the West Park mansion was reported by her as growing absolutely magnificent under repairs. The wedding-dresses, under the care of the joint taste of the family and two resident dress-makers, were progressing rapidly to perfection, and Larry was daily expected from New Orleans. Berkely had been nearly all the time in New York since his assuming the responsibility of a business there, and when he was at home, the Myers Lane work claimed his constant attention.

"Which makes it very pleasant for us, Charlotte," Katie said, confidentially, to Miss Waters, "for to tell you the truth, gentlemen are a shocking bore at such times as these, and Berkely though so gentlemanlike in manner, has an almost vulgarly keen observation of trifles that keeps one constantly on their guard."

If Katie really objected to gentleman's society in these days of preparation, she must have been fearfully bored by Joseph Waters, Esq., who came daily and stole a morning hour from the sewing-room, and occupied each and every evening of Katie's existence. Nelly and Bess worked busily, and with as much interest in the event as if it had never been the cause of a moment's disagreeable feeling in the family; and Mrs. Morrison, with momentary waverings between pride in the style of the preparations, and misgivings that they were rather out of keeping with the family means, divided her time in gratified smiles and sighing, and shakings of her head.

On the morning of the 8th of May, all the scattered shreds and clippings that had littered the young ladies' apartment for so long, were swept away thoroughly. The last dress was complete, and the last exhausted sewing-woman had departed. Katie drew a deep breath of gratified approval, as she held her wardrobe door ajar, and refreshed her eyes with the delightful sight of so many rich skirts of silk and tissue, barège and muslin; she even went so far as to call up Nelly from assisting Bess in a general dusting and polishing, after Ellen's less discriminating brush.

"What's the matter?" cried that young lady, arriving breathlessly, with her head enveloped in a brown veil, and a faded silk handkerchief grasped in her cotton-gloved hands.

"Take those hideous things off you, Nelly," said Katie, "and come and look at the effect of these dresses as they hang here. I'm thoroughly satisfied with them, and I don't believe Belle Dacey's will bear comparing, though she will be able to spend twice as much."

At first inclined to resent the call from her employment, Nell was softened in a moment by the view of the dresses thus presented to her gaze, and agreed with her sister that the Daceys could do no more, though so much better able to make their daughters a grand wedding.

"But," she added, "I must say that it's lucky Berkely's been away as he has—such a pinched, stinted way of living as we've gone through, to pay those two dress-makers out of the housekeeping. Well, I don't want to see another such two months, although it's quite reduced me, and I can wear your pink watered silk easily now."

"Which I beg, Nell, you'll never think of doing; it's a vulgar thing to do; and the night you had it on at the Floral concert, I was in distress," said Katie, with real feeling.

"But don't you see that we are all left short to get you up in this style," urged her sister; "and you saw no vulgarity in wearing Bess's lace shawl yourself."

"A shawl is an entirely different thing," interposed Katie; but Nell ran down, laughing, to her work, and told Bess that Katie was above, gloating over her possessions, and would need no dinner.

This was the morning of the day they looked for Larry and his wife; so remembering their last arrival, they were through betimes, and ready for their reception. But this time they came no earlier than expected, and scarcely then, for the whole family were assembled in the parlor a full hour when the hack turned into Burleigh Place, perfectly burdened with trunks and packages, and they alighted and entered the house. There is always so much confusion and excitement in a meeting, that Bess at first could scarcely see how Juliet looked, except that she was robed and draped in black, like a widow; but when they were all quiet and sitting around the lighted tea-table, her heart sank at what

she saw, although she had known that she should see it. The beautiful face was no longer beautiful ; sharpened and care-worn, it seemed that years, not months, had passed over it since it had shone there, gay and happy as a bride's. The eyes were by turns watchful and listless, as was the whole face. A word, and it would start up into an eager, keen expression of suspicion, that lied out to leave a weary look of utter hopelessness.

"I have been sick," she explained to Mrs. Morrison, whose unaffected astonishment at the change in her appearance broke out in words : "I don't think I like to travel ; I shall be glad to be at rest."

Bess, sitting opposite, was a singular contrast to the faded bride, who, though a year or two younger, like most delicate beauties, looked prematurely old in ill-health. Her hair had grown so that the wig was abandoned long ago, and the circlet of short curls in its place were very becoming to her exquisite complexion. She looked almost rosy from her constant exertion, and her face was as smooth and happy as if she had never known a care. Larry's eye lingered on her, critically marking this, and then glanced at his wife. Berkely's look crossed his a dozen times as he made this contrast, but he didn't seem to mind it, and watched her boldly with admiration in his eyes. He was entirely the same, if you excepted a slight disposition to be dogmatic and commanding, that Nelly laughed at in the outstart, but could not check.

The morning after his arrival, vowing that the day before a wedding was a dull affair except to those immediately interested, he took a horse and rode out, leaving Mrs. Larry in her room with a headache, and the rest of the family busy assisting Katie in her packing.

It was to be a morning wedding, and the carriages were to be in waiting at ten. That, Katie argued, would bring the bridal party back to lunch at a little after eleven. At one they were to start en route for Niagara ; that is, Katie, Mr. Waters and Nelly were to go; and no reception would take place until their return to West Park.

"There are so few whose complexions will bear morning wed-

dings, that mine seems providential, since Mr. Waters' brother's death prevents an evening display," she said to her relatives, as she directed which trunks should be sent to West Park and which to the depot.

"Mother, isn't Juliet appalling? but it's what I expected, for she freckles slightly, and has nervous attacks, so foolish in her, when Larry dotes on beauty."

"What sort of talk is that you're putting out of your mouth," cried her mother, angrily; "a body would think, to hear you, that the Almighty had no hand in folks' lives at all. The poor thing misses the love she's been used to; her father's heart grew cold when she needed its warmth most; Larry's but a poor stay for a wounded soul; may the Lord have mercy on her, and draw her heart to Himself."

"Amen!" said Bess, solemnly; and the whole party were silent for awhile, until Nelly unfolded and tried on a white sacque of India muslin that was exquisitely wrought, and the pride of Katie's life, when that young lady immediately took it off her, and with many rebukes restored it to its original folds.

A quiet day was followed by a no less quiet evening, although the house was filled with company. Charlotte Waters and Katie sat in Juliet's room, for she still declared herself too miserable to appear in the parlor, while a sort of gentlemen's party of Uncle Terry, Larry, Berkely and Mr. Waters talked to each other in the parlor, and Bess, Nell and Mrs. Morrison looked over preparations for the collation that was styled a lunch, but had some sumptuous features in it that belonged to a more imposing meal.

"Shall you not feel better in the morning, Mrs. Morrison?" asked Bess, pausing at her door late that night, after the guests had departed. Juliet was sitting in an easy chair, wrapped in a shawl, as she had been ever since her arrival, and looked up drearily at the sound of her voice.

"O, yes, no doubt I shall," she answered, absently. "I shall be quite well as soon as I'm completely rested. Is it late?"

"Rather late. All the family have gone to bed but Mr.

Berkely Morrison and your husband, who are still talking in the parlor."

Juliet looked up quickly. "Do you want to do me a kindness that I shall never forget, Miss Saunders?"

Bess came instantly within the doorway, and made her attentive face answer the question.

"Yes, I see you will. You are the best of them, I know; but I cannot forget that he—well, never mind, that's all over now. Only save me from this wedding; I cannot, will not look at it."

Bess came still nearer, and closed the door behind her. Juliet rose, and laid her hand upon her arm; she spoke in a weak, disconnected way.

"I am changed and broken down; it's a great blow to lose the love that held you in its strong, true keeping from every harm, and—and I am very wretched—that's natural—I was so happy, so hopeful, so mad—for I would not believe in what was before me, nor listen to warning. Oh, it would bring it all back again, and I should die—if I saw another wedding." She threw herself back in her chair and wrapt the shawl around her, but neither cried nor moaned—only shivered and seemed cold. Bess looked at her with her whole heart full of kindness in her dark eyes, but Juliet's gaze was downcast, and she threw herself from side to side restlessly in the great chair, cowering as if she were freezing.

"You need not go at all, Mrs. Morrison; just tell me what you wish done, and I'll attend to it. Are you sick?"

"I'm cold; I began to be cold down in that fearfully warm place. Lawrence said it was because I drank iced drinks, and he mixed me something that made me worse. I was very, very ill there among strangers. I thought I should have died; I'm better now, only I don't think this that I take helps me." She rose and got a large bottle from a drawer and handed it to Bess.

"Lawrence got it from his doctor, but I cannot think it makes me better."

Bess took it up in her hand and held it between her and the light, noticing that an odd sediment settled in the bottom. As

she looked, a strong hand grasped it from her, and starting back astonished, she saw the face of her Cousin Larry, white with anger and wild with the gleaming of his eyes, confront her, while the bottle, shivered in atoms, lay on the marble hearth, and its liquid trickled slowly away in little streams. She had heard the crash as he threw it there, and marked the terrified shrinking of Juliet as if she expected the uplifted hand to deal her a blow, and then she turned to fly from the room, for she had never seen a man that looked so fiendishly at a woman.

"Stop!" he said, fiercely. "What did she say to you? What has she told you? Speak! do you hear me? Speak!"

Bess's fear vanished the moment the angry man addressed her, and she turned upon him and shook off his restraining hands as if they had been straws.

"Don't touch me, you miserable wretch; don't touch me, or I declare to heaven I'll say that that you'll tremble to hear. She has told nothing, or said nothing; she does not need to; her face tells her story; look at her, and remember the young beauty you have blighted. Lawrence Morrison, you are twisting a rope for your own neck."

He thrust his face close to her as she passed him.

"It is you who are so beautiful and tempt me," he whispered.

She struck it out of her way as if it had been a hideous mask, and he recoiled with the marks of her white fingers tingling on his cheek.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE WEDDING.

A BRIGHT May morning dawned auspiciously for Katie's nuptials, and all the household were astir betimes, but little hope had Ellen O'Toole of having her summons to breakfast answered. Mrs. Morrison was looking pale and worried, and, despite her lavender silk and blonde cap, showed anything but a cheer-

ful face. A tray was carried up to Mrs. Larry's room and brought away again untouched, except that a little of the tea was gone. Katie and Nelly breakfasted early with Larry, who had afterwards stretched himself for a nap on the parlor sofa, to be called at nine; and Bess was flying from room to room, helping this one and waiting on that one, aiding the preparations.

"Just see to Juliet, and do beg her to wear something white about her, will you, Bess?" cried Katie, whose wedding robes were in process of being laced up by Nell.

"Juliet is not well enough to think of going, Katie," said Bess, seriously. "Don't ask her; it will be highly improper to think of it."

"Now that is shameful! How will it look? There's something absolutely degrading in her getting up this illness now, when it will seem as if she resented the family connection."

Katie grew angry in a moment, for that all the Waters should appear charmed at the union, was a favorite plan of hers, and she could not endure that anything should interfere with this idea; but it proved so entirely impracticable that Mrs. Larry should be forced up and dressed, that mortifying as it was, Katie was obliged to yield to fate.

"It's nine o'clock now, and the bridesmaids will arrive presently; Larry's sleeping in the parlor; Juliet was so restless last night, that she gave him no peace. Will any one run and awaken him, and see about the flowers there?" cried Katie, distractedly, and in one breath.

"I will," answered Bess, readily. "The flowers are all arranged, and I'll waken Larry."

She went down, and opening the parlor door, looked in. He was lying with his head thrown back on the arm of a sofa, and his shining black hair relieved against the scarlet of its cushions. His eyes were closed, but Bess knew he was not sleeping, so she came and stood opposite to him until he chose to open them. Only for a moment he allowed her to contemplate the perfect beauty of his features in repose, and then he looked up at her and smiled innocently.

"Is it time to get up, Cousin Bess?" he asked, in a natural, easy

voice, as if they had parted the best of friends on the night before.

"Yes," she said, not so fortunate in maintaining her quiet tone. "And I am come to tell you, what I have not respect enough for you to believe you would do of yourself:—Lawrence Morrison, you must leave this house to-day. I will not suffer you to remain here another night. Remember, I am not an idle speaker, and I say you *shall* not!"

He considered an instant, and to do him justice, his face flushed under this unceremonious order.

"Why shall I not stay here, Bess Saunders?" he asked. "What right have you to tell me so in my mother's house?"

She bit her lips once or twice, and then said, slowly and painfully:

"It is my house—you know it, and you force me to say so—it is my house, and you shall not stay in it."

He had made up his mind what to do now, and so he rose, and bowed slightly in acquiescence.

"You have been so generous to us, Bess," he said, in a humble manner, "that you must forgive me for forgetting the obligations we are under to you. A poor spirited set, Bess, a beggarly set, and you do well to remind us of our position."

He moved slowly away, and Bess's generous heart throbbed in exquisite pain; she was pale and sick; nothing could hurt her more than this, as well he knew, and so he said no more, but quietly went up to his own chamber.

Nell, in honor of her position of first bridesmaid, was nearly as resplendent as Katie herself; but Bess, who was not to be in the train, wore simple white muslin. Not that Katie had neglected to ask her; such a devoted lover of appearances never could have omitted that attention. Her answer was a short and decided one:

"I cannot afford to buy myself a new dress sufficiently elegant, but I'm obliged to you for the compliment."

Katie was too sensible to ever accuse Bess of falsehood; she knew her truthful nature, though she did not value it, and there-

fore made no demur, though in her heart she chafed at Bess's decision.

"She has been doing something with her money, for she has sold her diamonds sure enough, and I can't account for what she has done with the price." She also thought, and this was perhaps the secret of her annoyance, "She makes such a splendid figure, and is such a feature in the family; besides, there will only be five of them now she has declined."

Katie looked approvingly at Nelly when her toilette was perfected.

"You'll be a sweet bride yourself, Nell; you look like an angel in white," she said, and kissed her for the good taste she displayed in being lovely at snch a proper time.

Belle Dacey was number two, and Carrie Little, Adah Parker, and the younger Miss Lindley completed the train.

At a quarter to ten, the whole house was alive with bustle and the rustling of silks flying up and down stairs. The parlors were half filled with gentlemen, friends of Mr. Waters and the family, to whom he was presenting them over and over again, in a nervous frenzy. Vases and goblets were filled with white roses and orange flowers, and the perfume of hot-house blossoms ladened the air. Every one looked smiling, but subdued; there was no hilarity, for there was a sort of hushed waiting for the coming of the bride. Old Dr. Dacey walked up and down, glancing at the pictures and sniffing at the flowers, till at last, seeing Larry unoccupied, he came up and inquired after Juliet.

"I don't see Mrs. Morrison here; she should be the centre flower in this bouquet of bloom," said the gallant old doctor.

"Juliet isn't very blooming just now," said Larry; "the poor girl was so shocked by her father's death last Christmas, that she hasn't rallied yet. She has a weak constitution, and no vitality."

"Shall we not see Mrs. Morrison, then?" asked several gentlemen, gathering round the speaker.

Larry shook his head: "I'm afraid not; the effort to dress and appear in such a company would be too much for her just now."

It was ten o'clock. Katie was quite ready, and so Uncle

Terry signified to Larry, who ran up stairs and gave her his arm. The door of the first carriage was flung open, and the gentlemen crowded forward into the hall to catch a glimpse of the graceful form draped in soft silk covered with rich lace from head to foot that glided past them like a beautiful sprite, and was lifted into the carriage out of their sight. Then came the more substantial figure of Mrs. Morrison, whose idea of decorum on these occasions was an utter absence of expression, and a strong leaning towards angularity. She stepped stiffly beside Mr. Waters, and touched his arm merely with her gloved finger-tips. Miss Charlotte Waters, whose bright dark face looked out of place in the glory of white brocade, had yet done violence to herself to that extent in honor of the occasion, and now followed with Uncle Terry, who looked singularly grave for him. After them followed the fluttering beauty of five exquisitely-dressed girls, all vieing with each other in taste and loveliness, and relieved by a back-ground of black broadcloth and embroidered vests. In weddings, as in funerals, the lesser lights follow as they may, so the Warrens, and the Parkers, and the remaining Daceys huddled into the remaining carriages, and were hurried away after the rest.

In the centre of the empty parlors Elizabeth Saunders stood alone, her hand upon her beating heart, her lips compressed, and her dreary eyes fixed upon the scattered rose leaves that had fallen from the innumerable bridal posies. Not alone, for in the door-way another woman stood in the same attitude (it is so natural for us to shield a wound, even if it be an invisible one). Thus they stood ; a perfect contrast in face and raiment, nothing alike or in sympathy between them, save the hurt that they both had suffered.

" Are they all gone ?" asked Juliet, coming in stealthily, and moving like a black shadow over the broad bars of sunshine that lay on the carpet between her and Bess.

" Yes," said Bess, starting up, as if from a trance. " Why did you come down alone ? You are not able to walk."

"Yes, I am; I am better now; but I may never see you alone again, and so I came to speak to you. We go away to-night, and will never come back here again together, because my face betrays him. When you hear that it's all over, tell him to put me beside my father—he'll obey you—and I shall have the hope of being near him in the long rest I am going to."

"Juliet," said Bess, solemnly; "when God takes you home, you will see him in heaven." She said this, because in her heart of hearts she felt death was the only true balm this wounded soul should ever know; but Juliet shook her hopeless head.

"I was deaf to his prayers and outraged his counsel; he died full of the miserable dread for my future that I saw marked on his face, when I wrung his consent from him by ceaseless tears. I have sowed and am reaping, and the harvest will be gathered in another world."

"You suffer daily, and God is a God of mercy."

"I have seen or known no mercy, and I look for none," said Juliet. "When I die, make him bury me where I told you; if he knew I wished it, he would thwart me."

She turned and went away, leaving Bess to welcome the returning company, and Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Waters.

END OF BOOK FIRST.

CHAPTER XXVI

A GLIMPSE OF FORTUNE.

THE house of Morrison, having lessened its force by branching off into another tributary stream, flowed on rather more quietly and sedately than it had ever done before. All its glory and splendor was transferred to West Park. The bridal party returned after a fortnight's tour among the Eastern States, finished off by a glance at Niagara, and then Mrs. Joseph Waters was at home to her friends.

"Not to everybody," as she wisely remarked to her sister; "that would be simply idiotic, you know. There are a dozen people that we have been forced to know, because they were in some way connected with my father's early life at home. They are not to be thought of in our new sphere; it would be an insult to my own good fortune if I did not improve by it, so I mean to gather about me the best people of our old life, and judiciously cultivate the best that I shall be thrown amongst in my new relations."

What Katie meant by the "best" was not simply the grandest or wealthiest; she was a discreet, as well as an ambitious woman, and though she sometimes chafed inwardly at her origin, particularly when her mother or uncle became excited and lapsed into a Londonderry accent, she never had the weakness to abjure or deny it. Amongst people of ability or talent, she had always found the most sympathy and pleasure, and it was with the fortunate of this class she meant to adorn the splendid drawing-rooms of West Park. Being handsome and charming herself, she soon had tact enough to form a circle at once elegant and brilliant, of which she was the acknowledged centre. Fashionable authors and painters, amateur musicians, and parlor wits hovered round the burley figure of her blushing lord, who, proud of the admiration she excited, tried to feel comfortable, but found it difficult of achievement.

Nelly was her sister's aid-de-camp in all these social campaigns, and to do her justice, the fortunate bride did her best to attract Bess Saunders too, but Bess had behaved in a miserly way, she was forced to acknowledge, and had reduced the household in Burleigh Place to its original footing by dispensing with Ellen O'Toole's services almost immediately after the wedding. She had likewise given up the weekly tea-drinkings at which their friends, the Daceys, were standard guests. Sometimes she came to West Park with Charlotte Waters, but not often ; and Katie, noticing that she wore nothing new on these occasions, marvelled secretly to Nell.

" You know that Bess was more fond of dress than either of us. I can't understand it. She does not look like herself at all."

Nell agreed with her sister, but could not explain Bess's economy. Berkely did not remain at home long at a time now, and there was nothing in Burleigh Place that required much exertion. Mrs. Morrison was ailing with an obdurate cold, and kept her own room. Nell was half the time with her sister, and Bess and Uncle Terry were the only two members steadily to be relied on of the family. Newport was not then the summer resort of fashion, or it might have been dazzled by Katie's train. As it was, Saratoga was determined on for August, and Charlotte Waters and Nelly went with her, so did the Daceys, and a half dozen of the new circle of West Park. Berkely had taken Uncle Terry with him to Ohio, and Mrs. Morrison and Bess, with Jenny Brackett, constituted the quiet remnant of the once merry family. Bess had got strong and well again, no trace of her fever, except her short curling hair remained ; but she had become very quiet, and the thirst for excitement that had possessed her in the first flush of her trouble, had died out with its bitterness. A heavy lull succeeded the storm. They had been alone, with the occasional break of a stray visit from some old family friend, for nearly a month, when Berkely and Uncle Terry returned together. They had been in New York too, it seemed, and brought news of the young people. Larry and his wife had gone to Paris. Mrs. Edmonds, Juliet's aunt, had made

arrangements to go with them, for really Berkely confessed that Mrs Larry required care, she looked so ill, but the evening before they sailed, her aunt was taken alarmingly ill after supper, and although she was partially recovered in the morning, her nerves were so shaken, that she gave up the voyage for the present.

"So they have gone off by themselves," said Mrs. Morrison, whose troubled face showed the uneasiness the mere mention of her son's family caused her. "And did Larry never write a word of good-bye to us, or did he never name coming back?"

"They will return in the winter sometime, I think," said Berkely; "and Larry did send messages innumerable to you all."

He cleared his throat, and looked sideways at Uncle Terry before he resumed speaking, which at last he accomplished with some effort.

"Larry and I, in looking over some old papers, find out, aunt, that there was some railroad stock my father and Uncle Bernard purchased together. It wasn't a very hopeful investment; there were no dividends for so long, that they must have thrown it by as worthless. That style of affairs didn't last, you see; it began to pay well five or six years ago, and is now worth treble the sum it cost. Larry thought it best to sell out the bonds, and the money is here at your disposal, aunt. Uncle Terry and I have been delayed a little in settling up, you see, for I thought it best you should have the cash, and make what use of it you thought best."

Mrs. Morrison was slow to take in the startling idea of money being at her disposal, and seemed inclined to doubt that Berkely had told her the truth, which indeed he had not.

The statement that these bonds did exist, was correct; Berkely had found them, as he said, amongst his late father's papers, and on his return from China, had given them to Larry as having a better knowledge of business in that part of the world than himself. As far as he could see, half of the proceeds belonged to the Morrisons, half to himself, and he enjoined on Larry to dispose of them advantageously, never meaning to claim his portion

from his widowed aunt, with her too scantily provided daughters Larry accepted his trust with alacrity, and there the matter ended; for the five months that elapsed between his receipt of them from Berkely's hand till his appearance with his bride in Burleigh Place, no mention or allusion to their fate could be drawn from him by Berkely's questions or correspondence. It had been this that induced Berkely's visit to New York at the time Mr. Waters' estate was settling up by his graceless son-in-law. A keen business man, he had retained proof of the transfer he had made, and in his aunt's name, demanded the settlement. Larry had evaded so long now that it was necessary to answer his cousin, which he reluctantly did.

"He was tired of business," he said; "in fact he had no head for it, and might, in a year or two, break the credit of his father-in-law's name as a merchant, by ill-advised ventures or bungling transactions; to prevent this, he was going to close up the house, and selling out was always a sacrifice; in short, he expected to finish with a mere pittance. The stocks his cousin alluded to had rightfully belonged to him, as the eldest son; he had needed the money, and was not in a position to disburse."

Berkely Morrison's reply to this shuffling argument was the production of certain vouchers, which proved his claim to a moiety of the shares, and his right to the funds gained by their sale.

Hunted out of his villainy, Larry compromised by allowing Berkely to retain some of his unsaleable stock at a high valuation, and take bills of doubtful worth for the remainder of the sum. Thus it came to pass, that having retained enough of the old firm and its employees to carry on the trade of the late Mr. Waters on a reduced footing, Berkely had given his time and business knowledge towards its success, and this had been the secret of his stay in New York, and his short journeys South and West. It had been a singularly profitable investment, but he had never meant to make it a personal object, beyond seeing his aunt righted, and thwarting the wrong meant her by her dishonest son; so he took the first offer of the clerks engaged in the enterprise, to whom he proposed forming a joint company, and, be-

fore a year had past, was partially bought out by them, and entirely resigned all active interest in the concern.

It was out of the funds thus obtained, with their deficit supplied from his own funds, that he made up the tale told to his aunt, who was utterly overwhelmed with her unexpected good fortune

"Well, well, Bess, this is wonderful news; isn't it?" she said, drawing a long breath. "Who would ever have thought it? Well, I'm truly glad Larry was prompt; it shows how a body may wrong another in their own thoughts; I'd never have accused him of it."

"Has he not a right to a certain part of it?" asked Bess, watching Berkely's face narrowly. "Larry, I mean."

"Why, yes," assented Berkely, slowly; "he had a right to a certain part, and that part is gone, at least he has taken it. This is yours entirely."

"Then you'll lay it out for us, I'm sure, Berkely. I've been used to the scrimpering and scraping of saving for years, and I fear that anything beyond it would be too much for me."

Mrs. Morrison, whose only economy was in letting some body else contrive for her, looked at her nephew resignedly as she spoke, but her eyes sparkled in spite of her efforts to appear entirely unconcerned.

"We will lay it aside for the present, aunt," said Berkely; "but if you don't have any idea suggest itself to you of a better plan, Uncle Terry here, who is a capital judge of property, will buy you a snug little place with it."

Then transpired a plan for the comfort of the whole family, which involved a visit to the Hudson, and a trip among the Catskills. Uncle Terry backed Berkely's entreaties so strongly that this was determined on, and, at last, Ellen O'Toole was recalled, and she and Jenny left in charge of the establishment while the family celebrated their good fortune by a summer holiday

CHAPTER XXVII.

NELLY'S DISSIPATION.

On the first of October they were all back once more, and full of that life and exuberant recollection that belongs to a happy experience. Nelly had been home with Katie almost a week, and Mr. Waters came down to learn the state of the family before bringing her to Burleigh Place.

"For you see, she's not very strong," he said, his face intensely expressive of tender concern. "She's such a dear little thing, and she couldn't keep quiet when she was sick, which leaves her rather miserable now, you know."

"Has Nelly been ill?" Bess asked, breathlessly.

"Well, you see, it was a cold, and then, in time, it became a fever; but she's such a bright, pleasant little thing she would be up, and she don't like medicine."

"Aunt," said Bess, distressed at this hearing, "she must come home at once; she's been very ill, I know she has."

"That's what Katie said at once, you know," cried Joe, approvingly. "Says Charlotte, 'let me manage her,' but Katie said 'no; Bess understands her best, and she ought to be home.'"

Without allowing Mr. Waters to take breath after his disjointed narration, Bess hurried him off for her cousin, and Berkely, coming down stairs presently, found her pale and more excited than he had seen her for months.

"Nelly has had an illness, and a serious one, I'm convinced by Mr. Waters' manner," she said, hurriedly. "I feel a strange presentiment of evil. While we were enjoying all that delicious scenery and summer weather, she was lying ill of a fever in some uncomfortable hotel."

"I am very sorry for Nelly," said Berkely, but he added encouragingly: "She could not have been neglected or uncomfortable since Miss Waters was one of the party."

"True, true," said Bess; "I can't account for the distress I

feel about her, but I almost dread to see her face for fear she is as ill as I expect."

Bess had not long to wait ; in another hour her brother-in-law had almost carried Nelly from the carriage to the house, and laid her on the parlor sofa, struggling and laughing, with nothing of the invalid about her appearance, except that she had grown thin.

"It's so preposterous, Joe," she cried, "people will think I'm bed-ridden, when I'm just as well as I can be. But oh, how glad I am to be at home with you all again."

"Not so glad as we are to have you, Nelly," said Bess, kissing her again and again. "I don't know why I was alarmed about you, for you look almost as well as ever ; but I really felt distracted after Mr. Waters left."

"It was enough to startle us all to hear of your lying at death's door in a fever, while we were off jaunting after pleasure," said Mrs. Morrison, wiping her eyes that had overflowed at the meeting. "I'll never consent to your going off in this way again."

"I shall never want to go," said Nell, softly.

She threw aside her bonnet and laid back her head upon the cushions ; the glow died out of her face, and the light out of her eyes ; she struggled painfully an instant for breath, and then lay still.

Bess uttered a low cry of terror, and Mrs. Morrison stood transfixed in alarm.

"Water," cried Berkely, throwing up the window and drawing her towards it. "Water, quick ! she has only fainted."

"This has happened so often with us, that it don't seem so shocking to me," said Joe, holding a glass to her lips. "The doctor said it was the weakness occasioned by the fever. She's opening her eyes now."

As he spoke, Nelly raised herself out of their arms, and then fell back again. At last she sat upright and smiled, quite restored to consciousness.

"I ought to be ashamed to alarm you all so ; but please don't mind me," she said ; "it's a kind of habit, I think, and a very silly one."

Her mother had received too sudden a shock, however, to rally as quickly as Nelly herself did ; she sank back on an easy chair with her eyes fixed painfully on the pale face of her daughter, momentarily expecting a relapse.

Bess, who was scarcely behind her in alarm, conquered it, in appearance, and insisted on her cousin's retiring at once.

"I'll bring you your tea in your own room, Nell," she said ; "I want to tell you about all we saw in our Hudson trip, and you shall lie and rest and listen till you're strong again."

"I'm strong now, Bess," persisted Nelly. "You must get used to my turning pale ; it's nothing, mother, really nothing. Oh, don't look so distressed, I beg. Bess, speak to her, do !"

But the peaceful tenor of poor Mrs. Morrison's life was broken once more, and all Bess's assurances could not smooth it into calmness again, as long as she saw Nelly lying white and strengthless before her.

Bed was the practical idea after all, and Bess continued to press the point till her cousin gave way and consented to adopt it.

"But not away up in the third story where Katie and I used to sleep," she urged ; "it will seem so lonely there, Bess ; let me stay in your room, it's more cheerful, and I'll soon get quite strong again."

To Bess's room she was taken accordingly, and there Bess sat beside her, sewing, talking, or reading, for the next few days. Dr. Windell, whom the family had sent for in their first alarm, thought it best to make her rest, and it turned out as she had said, that a little quiet would restore her, for in a week more she was in her old place at the table, as full of life and merriment as ever, but not quite so strong or untiring. Her mother, whose tender heart had been greatly troubled, rejoiced loudly at her recovery, and enjoined constant care and watchfulness ; so it came to be a matter of course that she should nestle in the lounge cushions lazily, while her companions read or worked ; that she should be visited, amused, petted and fondled, but kept very quiet, and asked or taken no where, "so that I begin to think, doctor, that the world has abjured me," she said one morning to

Dr. Windell, who had just happened to call as he always remarked in his visits to Nell. "Bess must do something gay at Christmas time, or I shall mope to death."

"I saw your sister, Mrs. Waters, leave the door as I drove up," said Doctor Windell; "how can you be so ungrateful as to mope after a visit from her?"

Nelly half rose from her cushions.

"That's it—she's so aggravatingly bright, that she makes me discontented here lying in the shade, while she has all the sunshine. Can't I go up to Dacey's, well wrapt up, doctor? I scarcely cough at all now, and am gaining strength every day."

"So much more reason to husband it," he returned. "No, Miss Nelly, I'll not consent to your going about this winter; you did a little too much of it, and must atone wholesomely; beside, I've no sympathy for you. Here's Miss Saunders, who deserves no such training, and yet is a prisoner on your account. All the commiseration I have, is at her service."

"And she don't need it," said Nelly, pettishly. "Bess is good for wet weather, and doesn't demand sunshine to light her up at all. I am a poor, contemptible reflector, but Bess has an intrinsic light of her own."

"Bess is obliged to you, and only wishes you were correct in what you say," answered her cousin; "but, doctor, why don't you tell Nelly that she will soon be strong again, and brighter than ever? You physicians deal in the commodity of hope; you should not be so niggardly of it."

Dr. Windell settled his chin in his cravat, then felt in his pockets for his new memorandum-book; finally, he took his gloves out of his hat, and rose up as he drew them on.

"Why should I tell you what I do not certainly know?" he said, slowly; and as he spoke, he glanced furtively at his listeners, but immediately changed his tone, and asked, "Are Mr Lawrence Morrison and his wife still abroad?"

"Yes, I believe so," answered Bess. Nelly did not speak; she was looking at her slender little hands that had become veiny in their delicacy these last months.

"What did he mean, Bess?" she asked, eagerly, as the doctor

left, a few moments afterwards; "he said that in an odd tone—what did it mean?"

"Why, Nelly, what a nervous little thing you are?" laughed her cousin; "how are people to account for tones? Dr. Wendell is an odd sort of man altogether, I think."

"Yes, he is strange," said Nell, "decidedly strange; and I'm silly to be struck by his voice or manner, neither of which are ever common place."

Nelly laughed, and finally confessed that she had felt alarmed at his words meaning more than they at first appeared—that she was nervous, and didn't care to have people tease her about her sickness, so she would think no more of it. But in spite of her determination to this effect, she insisted on walking about the rooms and declaring herself stronger, in fact almost as strong as she ever was, until she grew white and trembling, and was forced to lie down half fainting. Bess regarded her earnestly, and seeing the effect of the doctor's random words, determined to warn him from speaking so thoughtlessly again. The next day Nelly was looking almost brilliant; her cheeks were quite aglow, and her eyes glittered.

"I feel so well that I'm going to sew awhile; this idling is what ruins one's spirits. I'll need a hood this winter, and so I sent Jenny for Adah Parker's pattern. Do you think this blue satin will trim prettily with swan's down?"

"Yes; but do you really think you'd better begin to plan and bother, dear," said Bess, earnestly, for the color was feverish she saw, and the light not exactly the old joy gleam that used to dance in Nelly's eye.

"Pshaw, you dreadfully tiresome people, that you are!" she exclaimed, angrily; "what in the world do you mean by conspiring to persuade me that I'm ill?" And she threw the silk and ribbons she held, down, and turned away, folding her arms and biting her lips. Just as Bess stood, distressed and irresolute before her cousin, Jenny announced Dr. Windell, and that gentleman followed his name instantly.

"I came in with a story for Miss Nell," he said, laughing, "a strictly nonprofessional story that I found among my old books

last night; and by-the-bye," he added, taking notice of Nelly's excitement, "I meant to mention something else. You were saying that these pretty gilt shades were out of repair, and that you didn't want the room disturbed by workmen, since you make it your morning lounge. Now I know the best workman, and the quietest, least troublesome fellow alive, that will do it splendidly for you; and by-the-bye, your cousin, Mr. Morrison, knows him too. Barnes is his name. Shall I send him when I see him?"

"No, don't, pray. I protest against that ill-shapen creature we saw at Berkely's houses last spring," said Nell. "I'm blue enough now, and don't want to be quite distracted."

Dr. Windell waved Nell's objection aside with his glove.

"The man's figure, I don't recommend; I only spoke of his skill and unpresuming pleasantness. Shall I send him, Miss Saunders?"

"If you will be so kind, doctor; I hope to have the house put in order before Nelly gets strong enough to crowd it with company; and there are a great many such things to be done."

Nelly laughed and brightened. "I shall learn to work at everything when I am well," she said. "I'm so sated with idleness now. Yes, doctor, pray send Barnes. I shall like to see him busy."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

UNCLE TERRY'S DREAM.

"Do you know, Berkely, it's a year to-night since you came home?" said Nell, as they sat down to tea. "If you have forgotten it, Bess hasn't, as you see by the extraordinary splendor of our arrangements."

Berkely glanced gratefully towards Bess.

"I didn't expect you, who were a happy family then, to recall

it so kindly," he said; "but I have good cause to think of it thankfully."

"I declare, Berkely, your coming was a necessity; we lived without you before, because we did not know what a dear fellow you were; but now, when I look back, I wonder how we could have existed at all, we are so dependent on you. Look at Katie's place, it never seemed so empty before—did it, Bess?"

"If Katie had thought what night it was, she'd have been here, I warrant," said her mother.

"No, Peggy," said Uncle Terry, "for I saw her this morning, and she told me it was *her* 'evening.' For a minute, I thought among other devices that came with her good fortune, she had contrived to appropriate one of seven nights of the week to her sole use; but it's just a way she has of saying that herself and her parlors will be on dress parade to-night."

"Let us be merry somehow," cried Nell, impulsively; "a good home-style of merriment, such as we used to have before. Katie's elegance took the heart out of it. Oh, why can't we be as gay as we used to?"

Uncle Terry turned round kindly, and with a faint tone of sadness in his voice, said:

"Too much sun parches anything, and we've had a little trouble, dear, that we'll find refreshing by-and-bye. Larry and his wife are back in New York, I forgot to tell you all."

"How did you know?" they cried together.

"Katie's husband saw the names in the list of arrivals, and has written to inquire, she told me. I meant to tell you as I came in, but it takes but little to turn things out of my head these times."

"I shall be glad to hear of Juliet's health," said Bess. "They made a short stay, did they not?"

"So it seems," said Mrs. Morrison; "but I've given up Larry; not a word did we get from him from the time he left till now."

"Larry never was a great letter writer," said Uncle Terry, sententiously; "that's a small fault, and I wish it was his only one."

Mrs. Morrison sighed.

"It must have been Larry's luck to encounter temptations in life," she said, "for he was naturally a fine lad; his marrying as he did was the worst thing of all."

Nelly roused herself into a shadow of her old impetuosity and feeling.

"Mother," she cried, "will you never learn to be just to that poor girl! She is more to be pitied than any woman I ever saw in all my life, for she truly loved Larry and married him in the face of warning and counsel, just out of disinterested folly."

"Folly it was, and folly it will be," said her mother; "as for the property, there'll be little of that left shortly, from what I hear; and as for her, Larry shows plain enough it was a fancy he soon got over."

"Were we going to be particularly pleasant this evening in honor of the anniversary?" asked Bess. "If we were, we've made a bad beginning. Larry's domestic happiness is the most cheerless subject I know of."

"So it is, Bess, as you would say if you'd been there last Christmas," said Nelly, sighing. "I think I got such a shock then that I've never enjoyed life really since."

"You made a desperate effort, then, during the summer, Nell," said Uncle Terry. "You and Katie lived so hard with your balls and routs among the Southern gentry at Saratoga, that you're likely to pay up for it for some time to come."

"It wasn't real pleasure, either," said Nell, despondingly. "I shouldn't care so much if I had really enjoyed it; but it was nothing like our old fun before Larry went away, or Katie had turned ambitious. O Bess," she added, sighing, "let us do something pleasant at Christmas, to get up our spirits!"

"Let us sit round the grate with nuts and apples, and tell stories to-night," said Berkely. "There's a wind rising out of doors, and just enough of what Ellen calls a *sough* going round the house to make ghost stories agreeable."

Uncle Terry drew his chair forward, and settled himself in it with a strong sense of relish in the proposition.

"I'll tell you a dream I had, to begin with," said he; "it was strong enough on my mind till I came down stairs this morning, and I've never thought of it from that till this."

"It isn't dreary or fearful, is it, uncle?" asked Nelly, shuddering slightly at the possibility.

"No, I cannot say that it was to me, Nell," he said, considering a little; "but you were in it, too, now that I think of it.

"You see, I've given up my book late at night, or I might have thought it was my reading; anyhow, it was odd to me, for I'm no dreamer. I thought that I was hobbling along on my cane through a road white with snow, and very heavy walking on that account; all along before me rolled a wide black river, and beyond it were the fields of my father's place in County Derry, looking as I've seen them in early June, gay with shamrock blossoms, white and red. If you believe me, Peggy, I never smelt the shrubs and hawthorns plainer than I did then, as a sweet, still wind seemed to blow over the water and bring it to me; yet everywhere round where I was it was chill, bitter weather. It seemed to get harder and harder to travel, and I was losing my strength so that I was almost gone, when suddenly I came to a spot where the river shrivelled into a tiny brook, like the run we boys used to jump over on our way to school. In an instant I stepped over it, and was at home in the old place, that looked just as I remember it, nearly sixty years ago; but what struck me as strange was this: my sister Rose, that died when I was a boy of fifteen, was the first to meet me, and though, to tell you the truth, I had forgotten every look of her face, I knew her the instant I saw her, and she seemed very familiar to me; so did they all, there were scores of them whose very names I'd forgotten, but who all came back to me, as she had done, when I saw them."

"How odd, Uncle Terry," said Nell, who had been listening intently; "you said I was in your dream: how was it?"

"Why I can't rightly say," said the old man, considering; "but I think it was just before I awoke, for it was the last thing on my mind when I opened my eyes. I was thinking of Peggy,

and wishing she could be there, to talk with your father, for, Peggy dear, Bernard was there just himself, as plain as ever you saw him, when I saw Nelly coming to me with a bunch of snowdrops in her hand, and my heart gave such a leap for joy, that I woke up with it. It is strange about the snowdrops, for I've never taken notice of one since I used to turn them over in the fields when I ran along beside Paddy Rourke at the plough. It was queer altogether, for I don't bring back these old things readily."

"Did you see any one you haven't named, Uncle Terrence?" asked Mrs. Morrison, solemnly.

"Yes, Peggy," he answered, in the same tone; "she came down the lawn after Rose, and pointed at the black stone that stood in the highway as she came, and smiled."

"Then, Terrence Blake, it was in another world you were. What nearer picture can we draw of heaven than to liken it to our old home? and it was that your mind made it. Poor Winnie Dawson! there's fifty years' grass on her grave now. She was your uncle's sweetheart, children, and was killed by a fall from the back of a wild colt of my father's, on that same stone, a week before the wedding day 'was to be.'"

A strange flush of an instant's life died on the withered cheek of the old man as his niece spoke. She continued:

"But that stone was taken up long, long ago; I never mind to see it, though I've often been shown where it stood. It was a dream, but a strange one, uncle—and to think that Nelly should be in it!"

She leaned over and took up her daughter's slender hand in hers, the hand that Uncle Terry had seen filled with snowdrops, and held it firmly in both her own, as if she would detain her, while large tears gathered in her troubled eyes.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BARNES' CONFESSION OF FAITH.

When Nelly came down next morning, she found one corner of the dining-room devoted to Barnes and his tools; he was already busy in his repairs, singing to himself softly as he worked. His voice was singularly melodious and full, and so when he stopped suddenly at sight of her, Nelly begged him to go on by all means.

"For, you know, I'm a sort of invalid, Mr. Barnes, and not in the way of going to concerts or hearing new music," she said.

"Mine is very old music; Miss Morrison," Barnes replied; "it's as old as the century, I think."

"Old songs are often the best," said Nelly, settling herself in the sofa corner. "Jenny, bring my chocolate here, please, and tell Miss Bess that I don't want anything else."

As she sipped it, slowly, she glanced at the little man intent on his work, and felt that she had wronged him in saying he was frightful. His face was sad only in its pallor; brighter, happier eyes than he turned toward her when she spoke, Nelly had never seen, and when he smiled, she thought the action made him beautiful.

"Do you like such work as this, Mr. Barnes?" she asked. "You seem to do it so tastefully, that I imagine you must be fond of it."

"Yes," he said, laughing; "I think this sort of cobbling and mending is a passion with me, though I remember the time when all work was a dreadful task. But after my accident, Miss, it was for years that such as this was all I could do, and part of it I did lying on my back in bed, for I was a long time there."

"That was terribly tiresome, was it not?" asked Nell, with a sympathetic shudder.

"At first it was worse than tiresome, it was frightful," he said, quietly smoothing the surface of the shade he was painting on a board on his knees. "You know people cannot learn to be contented with such a figure as I have in a day."

Nelly sate up and looked at him intently.

"Can they ever learn to be content with what is dreadful? When it is inevitable, they sink into apathy, I suppose; but that is not contentment."

"I did not," said Barnes. "I do not understand apathy except as a reaction to some painful excitement that will awake to agony and suffering again. I wanted to die, and prayed and hoped for that only. When I found I was to live, I fought the battle out in my own soul, and thought I had conquered a dozen times, to find the sting, only dormant for awhile, aroused again in all its bitterness."

His sweet smile, and the gentle glance with which he consulted her face, to see if the theme were really as interesting to her as her voice seemed to imply, held no trace of the agony of such a struggle, and Nelly, feeling that it was over, did not shrink from further questioning.

"How did you become so cheerful? Pray tell me if it is not painful to you," she added, kindly.

"Not through my own philosophy or goodness," he answered, laughing, "though I see you think so; but through a medicine old as the earth itself—the love of Him who made it. I had thought myself, after three long years of chafing at my own folly, and struggling with my own regrets, an altered man in mind as well as body. And I was in one sense; I could be calm and think almost quietly of the desolate life before me, and laugh bitterly at the changes a hump could make in human truth and love; but that was not a wholesome mind or heart, although I thought it was my portion to bear for life."

"Had you no sympathy or pleasure in others and their hopes and delights?"

Nelly, with her hand upon her heart, questioned the deformed

workman in the tone of one who had felt the pain she strove to analyze.

"Did you ever, starting out upon a journey, wonder at those you passed upon the way, busy with toils and cares, and joys that seemed strangely worthless and silly to you, whose mind was bent upon the road? Well," said the hump-back, "it was so with me. I had a dreamy way before me, and wondered at others stopping for rest or pleasure. I neither loved nor hated mankind, but I shrunk from it, at every turn."

"You do not now," said Nell.

"Oh, no; I passed that dreariest of all earthly stages long, long ago. A girl died in the house where I was lodging; she was a very poor seamstress, who, being no longer able to work, came home to die in the little room next to mine. Some ladies helped her, but she had no nurse except the woman's daughter who kept the house, and she could only spare her an hour or two in the day. Well, it fell out, you see, that we were thrown together, for I could not sleep well then, and hearing her sigh in the night, I would tap at her door, and speak to her, and she would answer me cheerfully always. It was a rainy fortnight, when I had little out-door work to do, and so I saw her every day before she died. She met the summons very sweetly and peacefully at last. Just before she closed her eyes, she said, 'Good bye; when I see you again, Barnes, you will be so changed, I shall only know you by your eyes.' There, Miss Morrison, you have the secret of my happiness. I had thought her a dear patient little woman, who having little to live for, would be glad to die, as I would have been at any time these years past; but as she never did look at me on this earth again, I thought of her words often and often, till their meaning drove me to a worn little Testament she had given me as a good-bye token. It was hers as a Sunday-school scholar, and had her name written in her teacher's hand nearly twenty years before. As I read, it came to me to know that this world was a drop of water in the sea of eternity—that God had afflicted men of noble minds, who had risen from the ashes of their desolation, bright

with the light of a purified nature ; whilst I was grovelling deep in its darkness, striving to blind myself with the dust I was scattering round me. Oh, Miss Morrison, I half forget the time—so happy have been my later years—when I did not bless God for marking out my path so clearly with this same marring hump of mine. It has made my life a humble, quiet one, so free from stormy trouble, pain, or disappointment. I had but one battle to fight, while so many carry the warfare through from day to day, and fall at last, scarcely hoping for peace."

"It is a little place this world, Barnes," said Nelly, solemnly, "yet it holds all my hope and faith, and trust and light."

"You, dear Miss," he said, "have every reason to love it, and the God who has made it so bright for you, and you must love Him too."

"It is passing away from me, Barnes," she said, shuddering, as the words fell from her lips. "Oh, I know it is passing away from me, and yet I cling to it, with my whole soul !"

CHAPTER XXX.

CHARLOTTE'S PROTEST.

After this day, Bess and Berkely spoke to each other of the odd fancy Nelly had taken for the good-humored Jack of all trades, who put up curtains, mended ornaments, retouched pictures, and regilt their frames with equal aptitude. He was working in one room or the other of the house for nearly a week, and Nelly followed him with her pillows, and took up her place where she could lie with half-closed eyes, and hear him sing a grand old hymn, written, as he told her, by a cobbler fifty years ago. It was his favorite, and Nelly listened to the strange, stormy life of its author, Thomas Olivers, as Barnes dwelt on it rapturously, imparting to his pale listener, a shadow of his overflowing enthusiasm ; for Barnes, from the depths of his gloomy pit of

despondence, had risen into no less ardent a light of faith than Methodism. "The God of Abraham praise!" repeated Nelly, slowly. "I want to learn it, Barnes; some time I may sing it as you do."

Barnes smiled.

"Oh, Miss Nelly," he said, "you are laughing at me, for I know neither time nor measure, but just sing from my heart."

"That's it," she said, "that's what I mean; I will sing it if I can ever sing it, from my heart."

Nelly had never talked to any one as she did to her cousin's little agent, among whose themes an intense admiration for his employer was not the least. He had done good so quietly, that Nelly, in her shallow penetration, had never suspected him of it, but she now listened with a new delight.

"Oh, Bess, people are so much better than we think them," she said, one night as she sat waiting for the powder her cousin was mixing to insure her a good rest.

"You've got a pleasant employment lately, Nelly dear," said Bess, fondly, "discovering people's virtues, and dwelling on the reasons you have for being grateful; if you go on, you'll make us all ashamed of ourselves for not being better than we are."

"You're good, Bess, because it's your nature, you know," said Nell, with her old air of accounting for things easily; "but Berkely, for it's of him I'm thinking, he's very, very good. I always thought and knew he was good to us; but people are kind to relations, as a matter of course; this is something more. You should have heard Barnes tell the story of some families in 'Fighting Court.' Yes, isn't that an odd name!" she said, laughing, as she noticed Bess look astonished.

"Fighting Court!" repeated Bess.

"It was 'Belvidera Court,' Barnes says," continued Nell, "but took its new name from the energy of its occupants in thrashing each other. The women were a fearful set of half-clad desperadoes, far worse than the men, I think; and do you know, Berkely has been a sort of missionary, giving time and thought, and money, towards reforming them, sometimes with no hope of

success, and but little encouragement, Barnes says, but always earnestly and devotedly for the right's sake."

"I could hear nothing noble of your Cousin Berkely that would seem new to me, Nelly," said Bess, quietly; "but I think Barnes has been the true missionary; indeed, Mr. Morrison told me of what he had done. There was a girl to whom he was greatly attached before his illness, who coolly deserted him, and married his only living relative, a young brother, who was dependent on Barnes, being his apprentice, I think. Well, whatever the poor fellow felt, he never visited it on either; but when, by his useful, industrious life, he began to be independent once more, he helped them to begin business, and all that. Two years ago, the brother died, leaving a widow with four children; and there are five reasons why Barnes, not content with his salary as Berkely's agent, takes every job he can secure, and works so hard, late and early."

"I would not, could not, be so forgiving," said Nelly, passionately. "What a callous wretch she must be to take favors from the hand she has bitten. But," she added, thoughtfully, "Barnes is not like me, and that is why he sings 'The God of Abraham praise' as he does, I suppose."

Barnes came back again a month later. Berkely had bought some old prints that he wanted colored. They represented Chinese scenes, and his old life there was fading out of his memory, so that half reluctant to lose the wholesome recollection of toil and struggle, he had seized this way of bringing it back. Barnes, who might have been a successful artist if he had been born in that sphere where taste or ability is consulted in the choice of occupation, did capitally under direction, and it being dreary, boisterous weather out of doors, the whole family spent many a wintery afternoon consulting over colors, and advising Berkely, whose idea of foliage was of the greenest and most unvarying description.

Nelly was very, very quiet in these days, and seldom, if ever, mentioned the possibility of going out, or alluded to the gay world she knew was gathering round Katie in her winter soirees. Charlotte Waters came to stay a week in Burleigh Place, but

Nelly shrunk from her hearty pleasantries, and was only very quiet. Barnes brought back more life and animation than they had seen her face wear for weeks. Listening to his singing seemed her highest ideal of pleasure now, and his stories of early itinerants who were beaten, abused and pelted as they preached, were the themes that charmed her most.

"Don't you find your cousin greatly changed?" asked Charlotte of Berkely, a few days before Christmas. She was going home next day to her "bachelor quarters," where they were all to come on Christmas Eve, Nelly and all, Dr. Windell had said, and he was to be one of the party.

Berkely answered slowly.

"Changed, yes, certainly; but then she has had a long dragging illness that would naturally change any one."

"Pshaw, you know what I mean, Mr. Morrison," said Charlotte, impatiently. "I mean changed in strength of mind, courage, spirit, all that. As for her health, we all can see what that has left her; but her mind is what I mean. For instance, that man Barnes, you know, why does she cling to him?"

Berkely's large grey eyes darkened till they were almost black, as he looked sadly and earnestly at the speaker.

"Why does she keep her hand upon her heart from time to time? Why does she look at her transparent hands or measure her shrinking waist? Oh, Miss Waters, it's a sad, sad story to me, sometimes more than I can bear to watch, as it draws towards its close."

"You mean," said Charlotte, "she knows that she may not live long, and likes to talk with those who speak of church matters; but why not have a proper clergyman, one of her own belief? I don't like the selection."

"She has begun to tread in the darkening path that we mus all go through in time; if she has found a staff to lean on, whicl of us, thinking we can offer a smoother, comelier one, dare snatch t from her, and recommend ours? Not I; before God, I am thankful that she has found any help, and would no more attempt to question its fitness, than I would read her heart in its dreary struggle with her fate."

Charlotte was silent a little while.

"I suppose you know the family have returned from Paris?" she said, at length.

"Yes, Mr. Waters told me so," said Berkely, "and that Mrs. Edmunds writes in great distress about Mrs. Morrison, whom she is surprised to find looking so ill."

"I would have gone to New York a month ago, in fact just as soon as I heard of her arrival, but for a little scene I had with Juliet as a bride. I may as well mention it, for it may seem odd to you that I don't speak more of my brother's orphan child. It was on our first meeting that she told me with pride and triumph how she had married her beautiful scamp in the teeth of opposition and advice. She was so joyous about the heart-sting I felt her choice had given her old father, that looking at her shallow love, I was angry with her, and told her she would some time repent what she had done. She was insulted, as she should have been, for she was all faith and trust then; but though she seemed to forget it, it was in her mind when she came back from the South, with some knowledge of its meaning, and she shrunk from me, I could see, as one who would triumph over her in her misery."

Berkely sighed and bit his lips. It was a sore subject with him, that marriage of which he had been the harbinger.

"So, no one is going to see Mrs. Morrison?" he asked.

"I wish Katie would, though I acknowledge it would be Job's comfort," returned Charlotte. "Miss Saunders is the right person, but she wouldn't leave her cousin, I suppose."

"I suppose not," repeated Berkely.

CHAPTER XXXI

ALL TOGETHER ONCE MORE.

So Charlotte Waters went away to expect her friends as Christmas guests; but they did not go to her. A hasty note from Mrs. Morrison explained the reason. Larry had come home for a few days, and would prefer spending the time in the old house, and hoped she would join them; which, being an old-fashioned sort of body, with but little ceremony about her, she cordially did. A fruit cake and some jellies, in which she particularly prided herself, had preceded her arrival by several hours, so the Morrison repast was swelled in grandeur by the delicacies provided for their delectation at their guest's table.

Larry looked pale and haggard. He had come in upon them unannounced on the morning of Christmas Eve, and vowing that there never was such a dreary thing as a family Christmasing, acknowledged that he had sent Juliet to her aunt Edmunds, and made his escape home to get rid of being bored.

"What was the matter with Nell?" he queried. But before Bess could answer that she was something of an invalid now, he flew off to the delights of traveling, and a Paris winter, if it had not been for the annoyance of Juliet's nervousness.

"It actually amounts to insanity, you know," he went on, "and is such a desperate bore, that I think I shall go deranged myself under it."

"I scarcely ever saw a sweeter, happier creature than she was when you first brought her here," said Nelly. "Her present change is a poor compliment to your training."

"Yes, if a man were accountable for the sick fancies of a woman determinedly opposed to being cheerful," he answered, laughing. "But I'm used to reproaches, Nell, and have taken Job's degree in living martyrdom; so what you say won't worry me much."

"Nothing ever did worry you, Larry, except an interference with some personal comfort of your own," said his sister, quietly.

"What did you say was the matter with Nelly?" asked Larry, turning to his mother. "I think I discover some features of Juliet's complaint in her. I hope not, for it is a detestable one, I think."

"Is there a pleasant way of living in hired rooms in Paris, Larry?" asked Berkely.

"Oh, pleasant enough; nothing luxurious, you know, bare walls and floors waxed and polished; but plenty of gayety and excitement, if one is allowed to enjoy it. I shall go back, I think, by-and-bye."

"Did your wife enjoy it too?" asked Bess.

"I think not," he answered. "Juliet's health is so broken, she has but little chance of pleasure anywhere. Surrounded by every attraction to amusement and enjoyment, we passed our time like hermits on her account."

"Do you know, Berkely," said Uncle Terry, "I would like to cross the water myself? I wish the doctor would say it was necessary for Nelly's health, and we would all start off together in fine style."

"You, Uncle Terry!" said Larry, laughing. "You go to Paris! Why the sea would do away with you before you were half way over."

"Never fear," said Uncle Terry, testily. "If it spared you, it would be more than tender to me."

Struck thus suddenly with the idea of traveling, Uncle Terry brightened and became, after Charlotte Waters' arrival, the life of the company. He had been rather drooping lately, and Mrs. Morrison, who truly loved her uncle, rejoiced greatly in his rallying spirits. After awhile, Mr. Joseph Waters and his wife joined them. Katie—who had improved wonderfully, if to gain the style and manner of an empress be an improvement to an already handsome woman of quiet domestic education—was gracious an charming, being, as Nelly used to say, in a captivating mood.

The parlors, after tea, were brilliantly lighted as of old. Berkely carried some pillows into a corner of the softest sofa, and Nelly ensconced herself there comfortably.

"Do you know," she cried, "this night last year we had our

famous tableaux? I can just see uncle and Berkely tugging away at the curtain, and Bess flying round, with a powder puff in one hand and a cake of india ink in the other, getting up the faces. Oh dear, oh dear, what fun we had; but oh, how changed we all look!"

She glanced around. Her mother sat on an easy-chair between Larry and Uncle Terry. Charlotte Waters was rocking backwards and forwards in her mourning dress, just where the stage had been, and Katie had the air and style of not belonging to the house in her every motion and word. Bess was not the Bess of the year before. In her heart and soul she was far, far happier than she had been then; but the touch of sadness, the sense of coming grief, that hung over her now, tinged her face, and made it less bright than it had been in that dreary past.

"Yes, Bess, and you don't look as handsome as you used to,' continued Nelly, critically; "you look sort of worn and broken down. Don't she, Katie?"

"People's ages don't stand still, you know, Nell," said Katie, quietly. "Bess is a year older than she was then."

"A year! what's a year!" said Nelly, dreamily. "It used to be nothing; now, it is too much."

"It would be odd if we should all spend our next winter in Paris, wouldn't it, Peggy?" said Uncle Terry, still intent on the idea of traveling. "It would be like one of my old favorite books—to see the French court, and gardens, and statues, and pictures, and all that."

"Well, uncle, since you're so adventurous, it will seem cowardly in me to stand back; but I'm greatly afraid of the sea, as you know."

"But it's only for a week or two," urged the old man; "nothing like the lengthened voyage it was when we came over from home; and then we could take a look at the old place. Dear me, but I would like that well."

"So would I, uncle; no one would like it better than myself."

"I think we'll make the tour in Spring, and then you can keep our quarters in Paris for us, when we go to Rome and

Venice," said Katie. "Do carry out your plan, uncle; it will be of infinite advantage to the whole family, in polishing them up."

Nelly laughed her clear old ringing laugh.

"Polishing us up! Oh, Bessie, do you hear? It will certainly be too much for me, sooner or later, Katie, your empty airs. You poor dear girl you, keep your polish in West Park, and only bring your heart to Burleigh Place. The shine and lacquer is all very pretty to overcome strangers with, but I knew you when you were an innocent little thing, and we both used to eat the mint drops Uncle Terry bought us, off one paper, and Larry, the great rough fellow, he used to come behind us and snatch his handful."

"Well, that I may never sin!" cried Uncle Terry, "but I can see you two as clear before me as the day itself, in white dimity slips, tied up with buff ribbons—and you, Bess, I can bring you back, a tall slip of a girl, with your long yellow curls hanging over your black dress, hiding your face on your aunt's shoulder if a body looked at you. Poor child! it took a long while to bring her round after her trouble; didn't it, Peggy?"

Mrs. Morrison's only answer was to draw the stately woman towards her, as she had so often drawn the child, and smooth the beautiful head she had cherished, when covered with childish curls.

"But we're not going to let the night go by without a bit of fun; let us have a game at forfeits. It'll harm none of you to be gay, will it, now?"

Uncle Terry's suggestion met with such favor, that it was at once adopted, especially by Nelly, who, not being able to exert herself, volunteered to sell pawns.

While they were collecting them, Dr. Dacey and his two daughters came in, and family reminiscences being lost in this addition to their circle, they began to have a thoroughly pleasant evening. Mr. Waters was perhaps the most delighted of them all; not in the least enjoying the life he was contented for his wife's pleasure to lead, he plunged into unceremonious merry-making with his whole heart, and was so ready with grotesque

suggestions to Nelly, when her invention of absurd feats for the forfeit-payers to perform gave out, that it was absolutely necessary for his wife to look steadily at him once or twice during the evening, to restrain his hilarity.

Uncle Terry was ordered to imitate a knight tilting in the lists, for Bess's favor ; Larry, his opposing warrior, charged on him astride a cane ; and Katie was obliged, by the rules of the game, to give the opening steps of an Irish jig in company with Dr. Dacey, and as she was a thoroughly good dancer, it was really charming to see her queenly dignity unbend with the enjoyment of the moment.

"Ha, ha, ha !" laughed Mr. Waters, uproariously, "that is worth seeing. O Katie, finish it, do ; I'd rather look at such figures, than all the waltzing and quadrilling we have at our house."

"Joseph," said his wife, almost sternly, "I shall give up the game if you are so coarse. Your ha-haing equals Nellie's."

"Come, children," cried Uncle Terry, "let us finish with blindman's buff. Tie this round my eyes, Bess, and see if I don't scatter you all."

No wonder Mrs. Morrison held up her hands in amazement at the scene that followed. The old man seemed to have forgotten his years, and to have become as lithe and nimble as a youth. Springing from side to side, to avoid his grasp, the young people sped around the rooms like tops. Nellie laughed and clapped her hands.

"Here, uncle !" she would scream, "this way, and you will catch Bess ; Kate's by the piano ; there's Larry under your hand ! Look out, be quick ; here they are !"

But they eluded the energetic turnings and twistings of the old gentleman, and growing bolder, even tweaked him by the beard, pulled his gown, and stole his snuff-box, which threw him into mimic rage and frenzy.

At last, he sank back on the sofa, exhausted ; and, pulling his handkerchief from his eyes, wiped the perspiration away, that sprang thick over his brow.

"If this was serving my Maker, I would think it hard work,"

he said. "Bess, is there anything for us to refresh ourselves with?"

"Supper's waiting," answered Jenny, opportunely, and they all went out together.

At the head of the table was a great punch-bowl, full of a beverage compounded after Uncle Terry's recipe.

"Yule punch, that wouldn't harm man or babe," he said; "and was just the making of a body on a cold night."

Under his wife's eye, Joseph waived the punch aside, for Katie declared it vulgar; but Uncle Terry stood up authoritatively, and commanded all of them to fill up and pledge him.

"The Lord only, that holds our lives in the hollow of His hand, knows when we will all meet again; this is wishing that He may guard and guide us in all our ways, and grant that if we never stand together face to face again, there may be a blessed hope of our all being gathered in one family in heaven."

They all rose and emptied the little glasses, except Nelly; she watched Uncle Terry's face, and scarcely touched hers. The great hall clock struck twelve slowly and distinctly.

"It's Christmas morning," said Mrs. Morrison. "Lord bless you all, and a merry Christmas and a happy New Year to you."

"Wait till daylight before you wish me mine, Peggy," said Uncle Terry, "for someway I'm that slow of faith, that I never can think it's morning till I see the light of the sun."

"I'll be at your door bright and early with your coffee, uncle," cried Bess, laughing. "So you may expect a hearty one from me."

CHAPTER XXXII.

UNCLE TERRY'S DREAM IS READ.

THE night before had been a busy one outside, and Bess, being up early on Christmas morning, found the snow lying high on the

window-sills and ornamental fence-tops. Yet the sun shone so cheerily in its brilliant reflection, that it was, after all, a pleasant Christmas morning.

"Let us have good fires," she said to Ellen O'Toole, who came in from brushing up the parlor; "we are likely to be home all day, and will need the rooms warm."

"Mr. Lawrence is come down, ma'am," returned Ellen. "Will I set on the breakfast?"

"Give me uncle's coffee first, and then ring the bell," said Bess, hurrying up to the old man's turret chamber, as he styled his garret. As she came up stairs, Berkely left his room, and standing in the hall, wished her a happy Christmas.

"I'll stay here till you open Uncle Terry's door, and then roar my good wishes up to him," he continued.

"He may be lazy after his late dissipation," Bess returned, from the landing near his door.

"No, he's up; wait a moment," she added, and went in.

Berkely did wait, and presently a strange cry of indescribable dread, smothered, it seemed, by a sudden effort of self-control, smote on his ear. He bounded up the stairs, and in another instant entered the darkened room, whose curtains were closely drawn, and where a lamp, with the oil almost exhausted, made a faint, flickering light, at war with a strong gleam of sunlight, that through a narrow parting in the curtain fell athwart the bed.

Uncle Terry, dressed as he had been the night before, knelt there, with his arms spread out before him, and his hands crossed loosely on the dark blue of the counterpane. It was on them the sunbeam fell, and their exquisite whiteness was lighted by the gleam, into an unearthly purity. His face was hidden, but his figure was quietly disposed, without a contraction in any muscle. Bess had laid down her cup on the little table where an open book lay, and struck by the color of his hands, had touched them; her eyes were strained, her lips white with terror, and her whole face bespoke the shock it had given her.

Berkely had thought her a strongly-nerved woman; he had never seen her in this awful presence before. She pointed to the

figure, tried to speak, but failing, sank helplessly on her knees beside it.

He raised her gently, and then took up one of the cold hands, and softly lifted the face.

"Look here, Bess," he said, solemnly, "there's nothing fearful here. This is peace—this is rest; blessed be God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

"My aunt, oh, my aunt! the leaves are beginning to fall around her. Who will tell her, oh, how can she know!"

"Let us bring her here—there is no better way to die, than bowed before the God of mercy. Let this silent form speak to her!"

"Is Mr. Blake acoming?" shrieked Jenny, from the stairs.

Berkely stepped out on the landing.

"Send the family up here, Jenny," he said; and there must have been more in his manner than the words, for in an instant she was speeding away on her errand, adding to it the additional clause, "for suthin' orful has happened."

In a little while the room was full. Mrs. Morrison, Nelly, and Larry, while Ellen and Jenny peeped, awe-struck, from the doorway.

They received the sight in silence, not a word was spoken. Larry, who was first, stepped back a pace, and drew a quick breath; his mother clasped her hands, and sent up her heart in an agony of silent prayer to God, before whom the disembodied soul was standing. Nelly clutched both hands above her heart, and leaned heavily on Bess, with a strange gasp, that was neither sigh nor groan.

"Come, let us lay him on his bed," said Berkely, in a low tone, to Larry, who, with an ill-repressed shudder, obeyed. They took him up, and stretched out there on his narrow bed, he looked younger and handsomer than any but Mrs. Morrison could remember him. Smiling and placid, with nothing of the horror of death in his shapely features.

Then they saw that his face was on an open book—that his breath had passed away among the leaves. An old book, as old as hope and faith, and mercy and peace, but no romance—no,

no ; thank God, a blessed reality that endures after the vain pleasures and follies of the earth are all passed away.

Bess, with her arm around her cousin, strove to point to it, feeling as Berkely had argued, these dumb things must speak consolation ; but Nelly broke from her, and threw herself upon the body.

"Dear, dear uncle ! dear, dear uncle !" she sobbed ; "it will not be long till I come to you with my hands full of snowdrops."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A "WAKE."

Some families seem marked out by Providence to meet with sickness and death, so calmly and composedly do they encounter either ; but it was not thus with the Morrisons—a more completely stricken or desolated household did not gather silently in darkened chambers on Christmas Day.

Bess, the first to give way, was the first to recover her self-control, and lead poor Nelly down to her own room, where she lay down passively, turning her hidden face towards the wall. Mrs. Morrison sat beside the bed with its solemn occupant, and left it no more until the best chamber below stairs was prepared for its reception. Berkely took the dreary business entailed upon the living by the dead, and after a few sad words of conference with his aunt, departed on his errand. Larry's evident horror of the work and his unfitness for it, gave Berkely this prerogative, and his cousin seized eagerly at the task of riding over to Katie's, Miss Waters, the Daceys, and all the old family friends, with tidings of the sudden death.

"But, pray tell them all, Larry," said Bess, whose dislike to the bustle and flurry of strangers' services, rejected the thought of a house full of officious people, "pray tell them all that there is nothing needed, except the presence of a few old friends

at night, as your mother desires the old family custom to be observed."

"I'm going to a hotel, Bess," said Larry. "My room will be needed, you see, and I don't want to be in the way. Though, of course, I'll stay in town until after the funeral."

"To a hotel, Larry!" cried Bess. "What will your mother say?"

"I'm sure I don't know; what should she say?" he answered, slightingly. "I'll be out of my element here; Berkely does all you want, and in fact, I've made up my mind to it, so that's the end of it. You know, I shall be coming and going, and it will make no difference."

So he departed, looking, despite his careless air, pretty well shocked by the event of the morning.

Then came Ellen O'Toole, like an elephant on tiptoe, creaking every board in the house, as she laboriously balanced herself in her efforts to be noiseless, from room to room.

"Mrs. Morrison, dear, ye must dhrink this drap ov tay. Sure ye'll have no stringth to meet yer grief if ye don't. Och, ma'am, the Lord gave, and it's himself has the right to take away. Sure a lady ov yer sinse and religion will niver be murmuring at His will."

Perhaps less homely consolation would have been less effective. Mrs. Morrison's first coherent words about her dead uncle were spoken to this red-eyed domestic.

"Ellen, dear, I'm glad to see you feel, for from the kitten by the kitchen fire, to the first in the house, he had a kind word and a kind look for all. Oh, may the Lord keep him in His eternal rest!" And she broke into a passion of tears on the broad shoulder that heaved in sobbing sympathy.

Towards afternoon, Ellen was able to make even poor Nelly, who was much quieter now, swallow some beef-tea; and between these two she divided her time and skill.

Bess found that saving balm in rational grief, plenty to do. As she had rejected the painful aid of strangers, she made haste not to need it, in case of its being pressed; and knowing that towards nightfall, the men, whose silent stealthy step she dreaded

to hear, would come to take the measure of her poor uncle's narrow house, she hastened to put the chamber vacated by Larry in order for the reception of the body.

"And I shall need you, Jenny," she whispered to the little maid, who, without a shadow of her usual explosive spirit, was stealing softly about her work. "Come up with me, and carry these covers."

"Oh, yes, Miss Bess," the poor little creature broke out, in a piercing under-tone, whose suppression made her red in the face. "Please let me do anything I can for Mr. Blake, because I used to trouble him; but it was just for fun, and 'cause I thought he liked to run after me, and I liked to have him; but I never thought he'd go off so suddint, or I would have been kinder and minded him more."

Bess, seeing the earnestness of her face, was drawn towards her in sympathy.

"You're a good little girl, Jenny," she said, "and shall help me to make his last bed beautiful."

For this woman was so far a materialist that she was guided by an unacknowledged idea in her own mind, that the dead man would be better for lying in exquisite white, with curtains wreathed with ivy leaves and Christmas berries, in token of his ripe life and peaceful death—that everything should be spotless and pure—that in his unconscious presence should remain the three things he had kept as nameless treasures—a stuffed Irish linnet, preserved so long that its very color was lost, and its feathers scattered like dust when you moved the vase it was in; a fancy picture of a young girl on horse-back; and, the last and best, the old black morocco-bound book that was pressed by his dead lips.

Towards twilight, Berkely looked in on her in her silent work.

"All is ready," she said, softly smoothing the beautiful lace-covered pillow that was to receive the honored white head.

"Will you not go down stairs?" he said, persuasively.

"Oh no, please; let us be with him," she said; "I trust in God, people will not fly from me when my breath's gone."

Presently, a faint, desolate sobbing sounded through the house, and Bess went to the chamber door to receive her aunt, who had only now left her post above stairs.

"Nelly is sleeping," she whispered, and the mother hushed at once, while the slow, heavy tread began on the upper stairs.

Mrs. Morrison agreed with her niece about the last bed of her uncle.

"Oh, it's beautiful, Bess, dear," she said; "it's just as it should be; his life was spotless, and his memory will be green."

The heavy tread above came nearer and nearer, and Ellen O'Toole peeped in, with a question of permission in her tearful eye.

"Yes, come in, Ellen," said her mistress. "Do you mind the night before Larry's wedding, he came up to look at the new lace covers and the rosettes Bess had made? Oh, but this is a different day, a different day!"

"Are they going to put no shroud upon him?" said Ellen, in a terrified whisper. "Sure that's his new black shute that he put on him for the first time yesterday."

"And why should we take it off him?" said Bess, almost fiercely. "No, it would be desecration to stir a fold of it. If I could have wrought his coffin with my own fingers, no one, but with the hands of love, should ever have touched him."

The door opened. Feet first—Bess caught sight of the comely shoes that the old man still had taken a harmless pride in, and then she closed her eyes—it was a harder sight to bear than she had thought. But it was part of her religion not to shrink, and she looked again. It was no workman bore the head and shoulders—they were supported on Berkely's broad bosom, and she looked aside no more. As they laid him down softly and stepped aside, she stooped and kissed him, as his head sank in the beautiful cushion that received it, and she said in her soul, "You are welcome!" for everything there was hers, bought with her dead mother's legacy—bought and chosen with a beating heart, blushing cheek and smiling eye, when her money-cup ran over with hope, and she could see no cloud before her as a promised bride.

That evening brought a note from Larry; he was going to bed early at the United States Hotel; he had a headache, and would be with them in the morning. The house was full of strangers by this time. Mr. Waters reported Katie too ill of the shock to be moved; but was, as he always was, full of kindest sympathy, and kept repeating:

"So remarkably jolly as he was too! I declare it's too bad—too bad." Not with the least idea of profanely arraigning Providence for its decrees, but as an expression of heartfelt feeling.

The watchers, six of Uncle Terry's oldest friends, remained, and at nearly midnight, every one else departed.

Mrs. Morrison's ideas, Bess feeling sure they were those of her uncle, were consulted in every particular, and the gas was not lighted in the front chamber; in its stead burned six tall wax candles, and the company sat about and talked quietly and cheerfully, as if their old friend were sleeping. Berkely's chair was close beside the bed; he knew Bess felt easiest when she saw him there; and as the clock struck twelve, she led in her cousin, very weak and white looking, and supported her to a chair. Then Mrs. Morrison followed, with a broad silver tray, filled with glasses and a large decanter of port wine. Silently she passed around and served each guest. Dr. Dacey's father, the oldest man present, rose; all followed his example, and drank in silence. Then the three women stole out together, and left the wine upon the table, and the body of Terrence Blake, of Blake Lodge, Londonderry, Ireland, lay in state, and his friends kept wake around it.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FADING.

"Mr. Lawrence is in the parlor, and wants to speak to you, Miss," said Jenny Brackett, the next day, as Bess came down from carrying up Nelly's breakfast. Mrs. Morrison had volun-

teered to stay, and insisted on Nelly's eating ; so there was nothing to prevent Bess instantly responding to her cousin's wish, which she did.

Mr. Lawrence Morrison was looking pale and something worn, though not a whit the less handsome. He got up as she came in, and said :

" I call on you for directions, Bess, because I know you are so much calmer, and have so much more self-possession in trouble than the rest of them. Is there anything I can do this morning ?"

" No," said Bess, slowly, " there is nothing undone that I can think of. We are doing very little beyond the business Berkely is attending to for us. Charlotte Waters came at once, and took charge of the mourning ; and you know your mother's wish is that none but gentleman friends attend the funeral."

" I am very glad, very glad," said Larry. " I am a worthless fellow in time of need, no one feels that more keenly than I do. How horribly dark it is in here ; are the shutters bolted ?"

" They are bowed," said Bess ; " but the curtains are heavy."

" Oh, Bess, I am a wretched man," Larry broke out, plunging at once into a strange subject. " I am mad with remorse and hopeless misery."

He bowed his head, and shook and sobbed between his trembling hands.

Bess Saunders looked at him in the dim light in which they sate, surprised and pained.

" Nothing is hopeless in this world, Larry," she said, gently " I am very sorry for you, whatever your trouble is."

" It is a trouble you should hate me for—that I despise myself for—that I bear about my neck like a millstone, and that I sometimes think will sink me like one at last."

" Lawrence Morrison," she said, calmly and kindly, " if you think I either hate or accuse you, you do us both injustice. Before God I assure you, I forgive you from my inmost heart. I would not say this," she added, more hurriedly, and with a rising flush in her cheeks, " but that I fear you would not know it of yourself, I am true friends with you ; the past is blotted out for ever."

His tone grew sadder, and his melodious voice trembled as he leaned towards her.

"Your forgiving me makes it harder for me to forgive myself; but oh, stay, Bess (for she had risen); hear me for a moment. The girl loved me—she almost told me so. I was vain and foolish; above all, I was away from you, my light, my star! I forgot myself, my truth, my happiness. But you are revenged; I suffer the tortures due a thousand crimes. I know neither rest nor peace—tied to a clod, whose very inanimate presence is an insult to my memory. I drag a life full of the hell-pangs of Sisyphus when I look on you. You shall not go—wait, I must tell you all; this creature is dying, in mercy to me and to herself; there will be some hope for me if you will give me one word—don't fly from me—I only ask you for a word, Bess—do you hear me? I have suffered in silence so long, I will be answered!"

He had followed her to the parlor door, which she had flung wide open, and as he laid his detaining hand upon her, she thrust him aside, and he staggered back against the coffin of his uncle that the undertaker's men were carrying past him up the stairs.

From that time Elizabeth Saunders never came near or looked at him. She saw him once or twice come in at the hall door, or pass out again, but she never was in the same room with him, till the time of the funeral, when the family all knelt to hear the solemn service of the church, around the coffin up stairs. The rooms below were crowded with gentlemen, some old business friends of twenty years before, who had not seen the old man a score of times since, and whose memories were refreshed by the announcement in the paper. Dozens of oddly dressed, eccentric figures, old pensioners on the small charities of the large heart of Uncle Terry, and a few specimens whose appearance was the dread of Katie's life, and for whom she felt a horror, their simple harmlessness but ill accounted for. They were the sprinkling of emigrants from his father's place, some of whom had been laboring men and cotters there when he was a boy. They and their sons and their sons' sons came bowed with respectful grief, and toddled meekly into the "grand parlor" and up the stairs

to take a solemn leave of their landlord's youngest son, whom some of them had known as Master Terrence. Peeping from Berkely's bowed windows to see that the funeral cortege did credit to her husband's presence, with Larry and Berkely in the first carriage as chief mourners, Katie's wrath overflowed at these shambling figures being helped into the first coach that followed the private carriages of friends.

"That is just what one might expect from anything Bess Saunders managed," she said to herself. "That's her sentiment, and recollection of old times, and all that humbug. Much use in her coffin with a gold plate, that will cost her nicely, I hope, when she takes a pride in disgracing the family with such a ragtag. But oh, how pale and grand and noble Larry looked!" she thought, and this was her drop of consolation.

It was all over, and Larry had gone away to New York, and Katie back to West Park. The family was very quiet, and very, very sorrowful. Nelly had given up moving about at all, and Berkely had almost carried her up and down stairs these last few days, but she was calm, and had lost all her old restless chafing at her fate.

It was her odd fancy to have her uncle's plate still laid in its accustomed place at the table. "Just for a little while," she said; you may leave it off by and by."

There was no rallying from this blow; they knew another one was pending, and Mrs. Morrison kept close beside her daughter's chair, and watched each movement of the delicate hands, feeling they would soon be still forever.

Yet Nelly did not seem to grow worse; she merely lingered along, day after day alike, to read a little, doze a little, toss a little, and then to have an interval of peaceful quiet, when she would lie looking at her mother and Bess through her half-closed eyelids; that was the work of every day, and if there was a change, it was too gradual to be noticed.

"Isn't it odd?" she said, one day. "Who would have thought that I should die of consumption? I used to be stouter than Bess or Katie."

Her mother strove to change the theme, and tried to make light of the probability.

"Oh, mother dear, you must learn to look it in the face," she said. "It's what I've been at this long time."

Charlotte Waters brought the clergyman of her own church as a visitor to Burleigh Place. He was a kindly Christian gentleman, and talked to Nelly, as Ellen O'Toole said, "most beautiful," with a strong sympathy for her young fading life. Nelly listened with bowed and reverent head to the solemn prayers he read for her. He went away and promised to return. Nelly thanked him, and sank back with closed eyes, and lay thus silently brooding for a long time. Charlotte nodded significantly at Mrs. Morrison and Bess.

"I knew she would feel refreshed with the grand old service," she whispered.

Nelly opened her eyes.

"I wish Berkely would tell Barnes to come here to-morrow," she said. "I have no right to claim his time, I know, but he could be doing something in the house. I want to hear him sing."

"Such unaccountable fancies," murmured Charlotte. "Nelly dear, do you think it right to give way to such an odd taste? This man is a narrow-minded, uneducated fellow; good enough, no doubt, but not fitted to be the guide or stay of a mind like yours."

"I like to talk to him, and I don't think I am wrong in doing so," said Nelly, decidedly, and Charlotte gave up the contest, in which she felt she was unsustained by either Bess or Mrs. Morrison.

In a week or two after that, when she had been making one of her long cheerful visits, she called Bess into the hall, under pretence of seeing the bright starlight without.

"Close the door, please, Bess," she said; "there's a great draught here, and Nelly may feel it."

When they were out in the hall together, she said:

"I want to tell you about Juliet. Mrs. Edmunds sent me a letter yesterday—something out of the general way, you know,

for her to communicate with me, as since Juliet was left a tiny orphan, she never once did me the honor to consult me about the child's welfare, though I am her father's only sister, and as nearly connected as she is herself."

"But what does she say?" cried Bess, impatiently. "Is there anything worse than we know?"

"Juliet has been failing in body for the last year, ever since her father's death, in fact; but now her mind's affected. Larry seems deeply distressed about it, and has actually, in the face of facts, talked over Aunt Edmunds. 'He may have been inconsiderate, and sometimes even harsh,' she says; 'but his care and anxiety now almost redeem the past. The poor creature's madness takes the form of dread; she thinks some one has designs on her life, and is indeed a pitiable object.'"

"Juliet insane," repeated Bess, in a tone of horror; "is that what she means?"

"I suppose so," said Charlotte; "so my path is plain now. I'm no fashionable lady, with a visiting list long enough for a duke's pedigree, like her maternal aunt's; I can give my time, my thought, sympathy, all I have on earth, to my brother's child, and I start to-morrow afternoon for New York. This was a farewell visit, you know; but we must not let a whisper of this disturb those two"—she pointed to the closed door—"every heart knoweth its own bitterness; they will have enough to meet by-and-bye."

Bess stood dumb with distress and terror.

"Juliet mad!" she repeated, at length. "Oh, ill-fated girl, God have mercy on her!"

"But one thing you may rely on: there's no asylum for her but my arms. Oh, Bess, Bess, your handsome devil of a cousin has wrought us much misery!"

"Hush!"

The door opened, and Mrs. Morrison came out.

"Are you striving to freeze yourselves here in this hall?" she asked. "What is the matter? No ill news from Katie, I hope."

"No, indeed," said Charlotte, cheerily. "I was telling Bess

that I may run off for a little visit to New York soon, and that involves the use of a traveling-bag. Will I send for yours in the morning, Bess?"

"Certainly; and write, please—do write." She pressed her hands and kissed her, whispering, "My heart's heavy with dread—relieve it if you can."

Mrs. Morrison took leave too, and watched her down the steps, into the little close carriage that was waiting for her.

"Wasn't it queer that she never said good-bye to Nell?" she asked.

"No," said Bess, decidedly; "she didn't care to annoy Nelly by bringing change or partings into her quiet life. She will not miss Charlotte, for she doesn't care much for her society."

CHAPTER XXXV.

TERRIBLE TIDINGS.

The next day, while the family were at breakfast, the door bell rang violently, and Bess rose from the table.

"It is Charlotte's man after that parcel I promised her, and I forgot it till this moment," she said.

She was mistaken; as she saw the instant she entered the hall. It was Katie's carriage, and Katie, veiled and wrapped in her fur mantle, was hastily rushing up the steps in an excited manner.

"Well, Bess, this is the last blow," she cried, in a gasping tone, that vibrated between anger and distress. "Oh, this is really too much!"

To open the parlor door and thrust her breathless cousin inside, and to enjoin silence by an imploring gesture on the astounded Ellen O'Toole, was all that Bess had presence of mind enough to think of, in her amazement at the sudden apparition.

"What is it, in Heaven's name?"

She asked this with her back against the door, as Katie, sinking into a chair, threw off her out-door garments, and opened up a paper she held clutched in her hand.

"It's a letter," she almost screamed, "and it came by express before breakfast. It is the end of all the fine hopes we had for Larry—a disgrace, that every one knows by this time—and that mad wretch Juliet, who was never contented without scenes and horrors from the moment she came amongst us, has had her last fling, and drowned herself off a ferry the night before last. A fit of insanity, they call it; but does that excuse dragging the family name before the public? Good heavens! I'll go mad myself if I think of it!"

Bessie's lips formed the words after Katie, but gave no sound, as she leant, sinking and trembling, against the wall; the blood bleached out of her very lips with fright.

"Where's mother?" cried Katie, impatient of her silence "This is something to rouse a worm; the idiot that she was; but why, I say, didn't Larry control her! His aunt can write now, that they have suspected her of wandering for a long time. A pretty set, to expect, and not to act on their suspicions!"

So she was springing up again to rush out to her mother, when Bess laid hands upon her, and forced her to sit down.

"Dead!" she said, in a dry, husky voice. "Who saw her die? who knows if she threw herself into the river?"

"Who knows anything about it?" repeated Katie, sharply and mockingly. "Every one by this time, for they're dragging for the body."

"Is it not found yet?" said Bess, breathlessly.

"No, her cloak and quilted satin hood were there, and a woman heard the plunge and gave the alarm; but it was too late, and there was something about the tide, I don't know what, but the body was not found when Mrs. Edmunds wrote."

"Pray God it never may be, Katie Waters!" said her cousin, solemnly. "If you value the world's opinion, pray to Him that it may float away to sea till the last judgment. If it be found, rely upon it, there will be marks to tell a fearful tale against

your own flesh and blood. Oh, God of mercy, look down upon this miserable house."

Some one tapped upon the door, and then it opened quickly It was Berkely, whose glance of surprise at Katie could not hide another feeling expressed in his face.

"Nelly needs you, Bess," he said. "I'm going for Dr. Windell; run to her at once."

He hurried away, and with a gesture of entreaty to Katie to spare her aunt, Bess obeyed him.

Nelly was laid on the lounge, with a bloody handkerchief at her lips, and Ellen O'Toole was supporting Mrs. Morrison, who had fainted from the alarm.

"This is not a house to bring bad news to now, Katie," whispered Bess. "In mercy, spare these two women!"

It was but a little while before Berkely returned with the doctor, and then they both took up the poor, slender figure gently, and bore it softly up stairs, never to come down again until it should be brought down for the last time.

There was a long struggle between life and death, and Katie, subdued by the scene, sat weeping at the foot of the bed. Mrs. Morrison, completely overpowered by the prospect before her, could neither think nor eat; but Bess was calm—so calm that she felt shocked at herself for her quietude. Towards noon the hemorrhage was entirely arrested, and Nelly sank into a gentle sleep. Dr. Windell turned hopefully to her mother.

"Now, you know, Mrs. Morrison, you would not believe me if I were to say your daughter was getting well again, but I assure you," he added, kindly and feelingly, "that she is not now in immediate danger. Keep her quiet, and pray don't let her see that forlorn look when she awakes; that would be unkind as well as injudicious."

"I'll strive to look easier in my mind, doctor dear," said the poor mother; "and I thank His grace and mercy for sparing her here for a little while longer. Let me sit here by her, till she wakes, and I promise you I'll be cheerful."

Katie rose. "I must go home; I did not say where I was coming," she said, "and I will be back again to-night."

She looked towards Bess, who rose and followed her, so did Berkely.

While they were standing in the lower hall, Dr. Windell joined them. He was passing out, when Berkely stopped him.

"Doctor, Mrs. Waters has received a letter from New York. Young Mrs. Morrison, in a sudden fit of insanity, has drowned herself. They have not yet found the body, and it must necessarily be a subject of public comment. Is it possible to keep it from them?" He pointed up stairs as he spoke. "Or is it best to try?"

Dr. Windell heard this announcement with a grave face.

"Ah, dear me, dear me!" he said, and shook his head, and compressing his lips, pondered. Then quickly awaking to the question, he added: "Tell Nelly or her mother, did you say? I should not advise it—unless you wished to end matters. I should say it would be as sure a way of doing that, as any you could imagine."

"Cousin Katie, let me go with you, I want to see Mr. Waters," urged Berkely; for he felt that the only safety from her suddenly breaking out into her wrongs, as she considered the terrible calamity that had befallen the family, was to get her out of the house.

Katie, neither rejecting nor accepting his escort, went into the parlor to get her cloak, and the doctor saying he would return in a few hours, softly closed the street-door behind him.

"It's an easy matter for you who don't live in the world to meet this affair of Larry's," said Katie, to her two auditors. "Why, oh, why didn't they do something to keep her from rushing into death in this horribly public way!"

"Katie," said Berkely, "if you are ashamed of your brother Larry in your very soul, I can join you from the depths of mine; but if you blame that poor desolate, friendless, driven victim of his, I can neither understand nor sympathize with you. Human justice, setting aside womanly compassion, should make you shrink from judging her harshly."

Katie's eyes, in spite of their redness, flashed angrily.

"You don't mind a blot of scandal more or less, it seems,"

she said, sneeringly, "and naturally take up Bess's view of poor Larry; but I'll tell my mother about it. I came here with that intention."

"You shall not do it," said Berkely, quietly.

"Shall not! Who will prevent me?"

"I will—but you will not ask me to do so," and his voice changed to earnest entreaty. "You are angry when you should be deeply grieved—wrathful when you should be compassionate. This will not last; your better nature will assert itself, and you will do me and yourself justice."

"Berkely Morrison, I shall never forgive you this insult while I live—never, I tell you, and you may believe me."

With that she gathered her furs around her, and putting down her veil, she hurried down the steps into the carriage, which drove off speedily at her order.

"What have you done, Berkely?" cried Bess. "It is her mother's house, remember, and we have driven her from it!"

"The pride of her own cold heart has done it, not I," said Berkely. "But God knows, I am sorry enough it is so."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DOUBLE TROUBLE.

In sore distress of mind, Bess stood in the desolate parlors after Berkely left her. It was so much her nature to consider others, that even now, in the midst of her wretched perplexity, her horror at the fate of poor Juliet, her sorrow at Katie's indignation and her own lonely position in the helpless household, the one feeling that Nelly and her aunt must be spared every thing, was prominent in her struggling thoughts.

Berkely, whose judgment she relied on, had said to her, that there was nothing Mrs. Morrison could do in the case of Larry's trouble that would be worth risking the pain of mind poor Nelly

would endure in knowing it, and Bess knew her aunt could not preserve the secret. Katie's anger was dreadful at such a moment, but Bess hoped and prayed it would give way to her returning sense of propriety, and that in her aunt's pre-occupied mind it would not be apparent for a time.

"Mr. Berkely's man is outside," said Ellen O'Toole, appearing at the door at this point. With Ellen, any place disconnected with the one in which she stood, was generally referred to as outside; so Bess, divining that the dining-room was now the place in question, turned in that direction.

It was Barnes, as she had supposed, and he had a small pot of flowers with him, designed for Nelly. He was looking very serious, from having heard Ellen's account of how ill she was, and came forward as Bess entered, with an earnest, enquiring face.

"Is Miss Morrison so very bad?" he asked. "Dear me; but I'm sorry to hear it. Sorry, sorry to hear it."

"She's better now, I think," said Bess. "Wait a moment until I go up; she may be awake and wish to see you."

Bess dreaded to go up without something to say to her aunt and cousin. She felt so wretchedly, that she knew her face must tell the story of her heart. So she seized Barnes' presence as a shield, and carried up the flowers into the darkened room.

"Still sleeping," her mother said, "but very sweetly and placidly. Could Barnes remain awhile? She had been speaking of him when she was seized with coughing, and the hemorrhage occurred."

Bess put down the flowers on a little table near the bed; then she stole softly to the pillow, and looked down on the poor fading face lying there. Her aunt joined her on tip-toe.

"Poor Katie was terribly shaken," she whispered. "It was wonderful to see the change in her this morning. Sometimes I have thought her a cold-hearted creature in comparison to the rest of us; but she feels enough, poor thing—she feels enough."

Bess did not say a word. A faint stir of the hand that lay upon the coverlid like something formed of alabaster, was excuse enough for silence, and she went out as noiselessly as she had come in.

Barnes was below in the hall, still waiting.

"She is asleep yet," said Bess. "But would you come back again, if you cannot stay now?"

"Yes, I will be coming and going all day," he answered. "I have work up at Myers Lane, and will be there this forenoon; after that, I have nothing to do till Mr. Morrison is ready to give me an hour in the evening."

"I suppose you have all your houses tenanted?" said Bess, without in the least knowing what she was saying; she could hear but one sound, and that was the heavy plash and flow of water against damp stones. It boomed in her ears as Katie had told her of the fearful fate of Larry's wife that morning; it had never ceased its dull, sullen throb, and every other sound was mingled in that one.

"Yes," Barnes was answering. "They are good houses, and they rent easily. The neighborhood is entirely changed; they are all respectable, well-doing people; though I suppose I ought to be shocked to say I let the little two-story dwelling in the side street to an actress or dancer, called Miss Adelaide Estelle."

Bess had scarcely been listening, till the name struck her familiarly, and she remembered it as Addie West's stage-title. Strangely it wound itself in her own mind with the trouble that shadowed the household, and blended into the dark clouds that hung above them.

"You see I didn't know her business," continued Barnes. "She said professional; but I'm such a dull fellow, that I thought that meant singing and playing the piano, till she was in the house, all settled, and then I wouldn't send her away. Now I find her a truly kind and good woman, though I fear it's a sad, sad way to live."

"Does Berkely—does Mr. Morrison know of her?" asked Bess, regretting the question the instant it had passed her lips.

Barnes shook his head.

"I can scarcely say he does," he said. "Mr. Morrison is a little impatient of detail, and don't like to bother with the tenants. So I rather think I have the secret of the stage-player to myself." He laughed pleasantly as he went on to say: "Miss

Estelle has been of great service to me, for I'm inclined to be a narrow-minded creature, and should always have dreaded her class. Now I know there is good everywhere. I was to go to her to-day about a deserted child that was found there about a month ago, and that made me think of her particularly just now."

"Was she taking this child to care for it?" Bess asked.

"No, that is scarcely her kind of goodness—for there are kinds and degrees of it, I think," Barnes said. "She does not care to see or talk to cases, as she calls them; but she will always help, always seem glad and anxious to help in fact."

"Miss Waters, ma'am!"

Bess started as if a ball had whizzed by her ear. Ellen, the announcer, continued:

"Ye couldn't hear the bell; Mr. Berkely muffled it when Miss Nelly fell quiet, for fear of disturbing her."

"Where is she?"

"In the parlor, and would ye go in till her there, she says. She's greatly tuck back to hear of the attack Miss Nelly had this morning."

"I beg your pardon for keeping you so long," said Barnes, taking up his hat and account-book, and going. "I will come in by-and-bye by the side yard, and ask Ellen about Miss Morrison."

Bess went into the parlor. Charlotte Waters was pacing the floor. She turned about suddenly and looked very pale, almost ghastly.

"Well," she said, "there's nothing to dread now. We know the worst—the story's told—it's all over."

"All over," echoed Bess, "all—all over?"

"That woman was here this morning," Charlotte went on almost fiercely. "I mean Joe's wife—that woman that I saw the snake in the first time I looked at her made-up face—and heard her unreal voice. She's wroth with the dead girl for injuring her second-mourning parties. She wouldn't wear full black for your uncle, you saw, and so she has wrought herself into a passion against the dead. God forgive her!" she went

on, in a tone that certainly did not seem to implore divine mercy for her sister-in-law. "I see her brother in her, and I hate her!"

Charlotte was so excited, that she raised her voice and shook her raised hands in the air, as if to shut out for ever all sight or sound of the beautiful mistress of West Park.

"Remember Nelly," implored Bess.

"Heaven forgive me! yes, I do; I will remember Nelly, and to be able to remember her, I'll get away out of this house. My place isn't here. Whatever of self-control ever belonged to me is gone now; I have neither strength nor judgment. You have both, and I'll not detract from them by my presence."

"Where are you going, Charlotte?"

Bess laid her hand upon her arm and looked at her imploringly.

"If I should answer as my angry mind dictates, I should say to New York, to have the life of Larry Morrison in return for that of my brother's murdered child; but I am violent now, I'll be quiet enough by-and-by, and then I'll wait, for as sure as there is a heaven above us, God's vengeance will overtake that man."

Neither at that time, nor in any time that came afterwards, could Bess Saunders say what she felt or thought. The death that had been, calm and full of peace; the death that was, violent and terrible; the death that was coming, expected yet shrunk from; all formed a shifting, changing picture before her eyes that kept them from resting quietly on any one event for a moment.

"You are going to New York still," she said, as Miss Waters went towards the door.

"Yes; though with what object I can scarcely say." She turned round again, and came back a pace or two. "The body is not found, you know."

Bess shuddered. She could see it drifting away out under the green waves at sea; then suddenly the little figure, gay in bridal finery, sat before the piano, when her hand rested, and she saw the exquisitely happy face turned round consulting her husband's

eye as she sang. She staggered and grew sick at heart. A blast of icy air and a sudden blindness struck her, so that she would have fallen had not Charlotte caught her in her arms.

"There, it is past," she said, faintly; "but it was death itself while it lasted."

"Gone for a time," said Charlotte, "but it may come again. You know what is before you, can you meet it alone?"

"I think I can," she answered; "there can scarcely be anything more terrible than I have felt."

So Charlotte Waters went away gloomily, vowing hatred and scorn against Lawrence Morrison and his sister Katie, and full of bitter sorrow for the fate that had thrown them in her path.

There was nothing but sleep, or an intense quiet that was near akin to it, for Nelly that day, and her mother never left her side. In all the great empty house there was no sound of voice or footstep, for Bess went up and down as silent as her own shadow, and no one spoke except in faint whispers.

Berkely had not returned since morning, and the doctor's visits had been mere glances to assure himself that there was no change. Twilight brought Joseph Waters, and when Bess went down to see him, she lost nothing of her honor for his manliness to find him in tears before a picture of his wife and Nelly painted as Spring and Autumn. Katie was still as handsome as when she wore the wreath of grapes and pomegranite blossoms, and looked a lovely Autumn yet; but Spring, poor Spring! had lost her sunshine and her bloom, and it was on her his red pitying eyes were bent.

"Poor dear girl! isn't it a shame?" he said, turning about as Bess entered. "She was such a merry creature, you know; she and old Mr. Blake were such good company. Katie didn't enjoy it as much as I did; but they really were charming."

He found it difficult to come to the subject before them—the suicide in New York. Bess saw him move his lips as he held both her hands in his, and she saw that he had neither word nor thought at his command.

"It is terrible," she said, to relieve him of the effort; "but it is done now; there is nothing left to be remedied, nothing to be

struggled for. It is all in God's hands now, such merciful hands that we may surely trust them with a poor crazed creature, who, I feel, is now at rest."

These were the first tears Bess had seen shed for Juliet, these that flowed from her uncle's eyes. Katie had been wrathful *at* her, Charlotte *for* her, but neither of them had given her memory one tear. There was a perfect shower from the honest eyes that now met hers, almost blinded by their emotion.

"She was such a delicate little creature to suffer so," he said, in his great compassion. "I could see it from almost the first, though I'm not generally sharp, and I tried to do what I could with him. I helped him out of a good deal, conditional on his promising to be sort—of—of kind and protecting, you know;" he spread out his hands to signify care and attention. "He was a capital fellow to promise. Lord! how he would re-assure me when I was in a manner dubious about him; but it don't seem to have been his style to carry out well. Poor little thing! poor little thing!" and he relapsed into sympathy again.

"By the way," he said, suddenly, as if the thought had but just occurred to him, "I'm sorry to say Katie is greatly shaken by these evil tidings. Somehow she sees in this fearful dispensation a slight or insult to her family dignity, which makes reasoning with her rather difficult." He cleared his throat several times, and then came to this satisfactory conclusion: "Every one has their own peculiar way of meeting grief and trouble, and this is hers, it is not in the common way of things, but Katie is not a common woman, you see."

"Mr. Morrison went out this morning, and has not come back yet," said Bess. "I cannot tell why, but he surely will be in in a short time. Do you wish to—"

"That's it," exclaimed Mr. Waters. "I was just coming to that point, and will be able to get over it in a few words, now that I've passed over Katie's antipathy, which rather stuck, you see"—he made the effort to swallow, as if he felt it still in his throat. "Berkely came to the office; I was hurrying through work to get off to New York, and he said in a few words, that there was trouble here, and you had decided not to mix it up

with poor Juliet's death. Well, I had some difficulty in getting away, owing to Katie's state of mind, and I had no difficulty in making Berkely understand me, or volunteer to take my place till—till"— he paused to find a word that would indicate the search for the body, properly and delicately, and hit at last on the terms—"till there should be occasion for the funeral services."

"Then Mr. Morrison is in New York now?" said Bess, in surprise.

"Yes," said Mr. Waters, eagerly; "didn't I make that clear to you? Well, I suppose not; I'm but a poor hand at explanation; but his going was a kindly service to me, I assure you, and I came up here, as I promised him, to say he would be at home to-morrow evening, and that Barnes would, if you please, remain here to-night."

Then Mr. Waters, who seemed feverish with his desire to do something for the family, began to press on Bess the necessity of allowing him to remain as a watcher in the house, or to do some service that would show how completely his heart was touched by their trouble.

There was nothing to be done, except a prescription to be got from a druggist's, which Bess preferred Barnes going for, lest Katie might chafe at her husband's detention. So that, gently urging his departure on that account, Bess at last saw him out, protesting his unwillingness to go to the last, and mingling poor Juliet and Nelly together pathetically, as he turned away his good, troubled face.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ONE SCENE CLOSES.

FEBRUARY, that dreary, snowy, bitter month, was just begun, when Katie came to Burleigh Place with the sad story of Juliet's death, and it was yet but a week old when Nelly had

sunk so low, that even that calamity was for the time eclipsed by the pending sorrow at home. Katie's dignity had triumphed over her wrath, as Bess had hoped it would, and she came daily in her carriage and made a subdued visit, in which she never raised her eyes to meet Berkely's or Bess's, but bore herself like an injured queen and a constant sister. Barnes had not only stayed the night of Berkely's absence, but by some inexplicable understanding, he had remained every night since, and was often found whispering beside the dying girl's pillow, for Nelly's voice was nearly gone now, and sometimes she could be heard by no one but the quick-eared little man. She had grown strangely cheerful, and was so perfectly resigned, that Bess felt the sting was lost from death for her forever.

Charlotte Waters had come home again, with nothing satisfactory to tell. The body, although every effort was used towards its recovery, had never been found. It had been some time near midnight when Juliet left home. She had a nurse, who had left her apparently sleeping, but after a short absence, returned to find the bed empty. It was nearly daybreak. She was traced to one of the ferry slips, and it was supposed that, having gone to a school in Staten Island when a child, she first started out with the idea of going there to see her old teachers, as she had spoken of them often as a place of refuge from her imaginary pursuers in the last few days.

The poor creature who gave her testimony, and the cloak and hood she found, to the police, conflicted in her statements; sometimes describing Juliet's figure exactly, at others representing her in a different way. She was a poor, bewildered wretch—a sad eye-witness of the last moments of such a darling of love and fortune, as Juliet Waters once had been.

Mrs. Edmunds, who was a good, sensible woman, as Charlotte said bitterly, considered it the best way to stop scandal, to be on excellent terms with her nephew; so she seemed bent on crying him up as a hopelessly crushed husband, painfully afflicted by a mysterious Providence, and thus meeting unpleasant inquiries into their domestic state.

This view of the case was wise enough to almost reconcile

Katie to fate and her brother's dead wife. She could now speak of her as "such a trial to poor, dear Larry," and hint at hereditary insanity on her mother's side, and even quite pity the poor thing, who "could never be called accountable, you know."

Nelly wished to see her brother Lawrence. It had come to that time with her, when wishes are sacred things, and he was sent for. Mrs. Morrison never suspected the secret signs, the sudden breaks in conversation, the mysterious whisperings in the hall, to be at all connected with her son's fortunes. "Did the doctor say anything new?" was her constant inquiry, after noticing anything of the sort, and when assured that he had not, there was no further motive for excitement or suspicion in her mind.

Bess held a telegram in her hand as her aunt descended the stairs from Nelly's room one morning.

"It is from Larry," she explained; "he will be here this evening."

"Does he say no more—nothing about Juliet at all?" asked she.

Bess was glad to be able to say: "It would be odd if he did more than assure us of his coming, by telegraph, aunt. You must wait for the rest till you see him."

"To be sure; you're right, dear," asserted her aunt. "I'm so broken down with trouble, that I look for it everywhere. I trust all's well with them."

"Katie and Charlotte Waters write often, so there can be nothing new, you know." Bess looked at the paper in her hand steadily. She was a poor actress now, and did not trust herself at all. Her aunt stood sadly at her side, and glanced along the silent hall.

"It's an altered, altered house, Bess," she murmured, "an altered house, an altered house! Sometimes, when I'm sitting silently by Nelly's side so long, I half lose myself, and think I must be dreaming that I'll wake up again to the old times, and hear Larry and your uncle and Nelly at their games, and see Katie looking on, and you busy and smiling. O dear! but

it was a happy time then, if we had but known it and prized it."

Bess leaned her head on her aunt's shoulder, and cried as if her heart would break; then, recovering her quiet, she accused herself of giving way, and called it selfish folly.

It was only natural that those two women should shudder at the work of time and death; but the figure, lying so still and patient above stairs, that the two irrevocable powers were fashioning for eternity, neither wept nor shuddered.

"For I am losing, not my love for you," she said, looking fondly at them with her beautiful violet eyes, "but my regret at leaving you. Since I have learned the depth and breadth of God's love, I have ceased to fear death, and I know there is nothing dreadful, but want of faith and trust."

Katie came just after the dispatch from Larry; but Nelly was sleeping, so she kissed her and went away. Charlotte Waters and the Daceys, with many old friends, stole up afterwards one by one, and looking at her lying like a phantom flower, beautiful, but not earthly or tangible in her loveliness, went away weeping, feeling they had taken a last look at merry Nelly Morrison.

At four o'clock came Larry, and Bess, hearing the wheels, went down to warn him to keep the story of his loss from his mother a little while yet.

He was already in the dining-room, where he had caught sight of a glowing fire, and throwing aside his cloak and wrappings, was basking in its light and warmth when she entered.

A glance showed Bess that he bore Mrs. Edmunds out in her story, by being in deep mourning, and looking as nobly sad and sorrow-stricken as it was in the nature of his handsome face to appear. He met her as she faltered in the doorway with a quick glance, that strove to read her very soul.

"I am very glad you are come," she said. "Nelly has longed to see you."

"Do I come *home* again?" he asked, in a sad and humbled tone, with a strong emphasis on the word.

Bess paused an instant, and looked at him inquiringly.

"You know my story," he continued, in the same tone. "My own folly brought its own reward. At eight-and-twenty I have nothing to boast of but a shipwrecked life—hopeless, aimless, and loveless. I ask you, Bess Saunders, have I come home? I have no other on the wide earth now."

He bowed his head and stood abased before her, an humbled prodigal, returned to beg the shelter of his old home. She neither liked nor trusted him; but it was not in her to scorn or throw aside the semblance of need or sorrow, so she answered him, that his mother's house must always be his refuge; that he was too young to despair; that Heaven could help him, as she prayed it would. His wife she did not name. She felt that what she knew and guessed had better not be spoken, and she could not school herself to condole with him for the death of the woman she knew he had wronged and hated.

"Katie has gone away for the day," said Bess, trying to prevent his replying. "She is not well, and Nelly was sleeping when she came this morning. Will you come up, or shall I bring aunt down?"

"Let me rest awhile, Bess," said Larry, fretfully. "O Bess, why should you deny me a moment of peace? God knows I have had few enough. I want to lie here and look around me. The old room may bring back my old feelings. The past eighteen months, from this point, seem like a dreary dream."

He had flung himself on the lounge, where he used to lie after tea, while the girls practised in the parlor, and Bess busied herself about her housewifery.

She turned to leave him.

"Pray, Bess, give me a word of welcome, forgiveness, pity, encouragement What you will!" he cried.

She stopped an instant. He had chosen the easiest position in the room for his penitence, and the most graceful attitude for its expression. She had seen him thus a thousand times, but never with such calm, clear, unbelieving eyes; he had wronged her in word and act almost every day of their lives together, but in the evening he would make peace from where he lay, partly on the strength of his great beauty, partly from the depth of her

fond nature, and always to his own advantage ; now he seemed to forget that she was wiser and out of the power of his spell, and to look at her with his old glance, expecting her to feel it.

"I'll tell Nelly you are here," she said, as she marvelled at the nature of a man who could so easily forget, and left him.

"Oh, Larry, dear Larry!" and the two weak, trembling hands of his dying sister clasped themselves round his neck, and held him drawn down closely to her. "It's only a little while since I saw you last ; but yet it seems like a lifetime. You were kind to come ; was he not, Bess?"

They three were alone together. Mrs. Morrison had gone to take a little rest at Nelly's strong persuasion, and Berkely had not yet come in for the evening.

"Do you know why I wanted to see you so much, Larry?" she said, after lying silent a long time, looking at him earnestly, and holding his hand in hers. "It was to say something that belongs to the world that I am closing accounts with. I want to ask your pardon, and to see Bess forgive you—hear her say so freely, truly, and heartily. It will take a little load away that has always made my heart heavy when I think of either. You used to like each other better than you do now—don't look so at me, Bess, I must say it ; and Katie and I were so selfishly comfortable in Bess as our cousin, that we didn't like to think of her as our sister, and so discouraged it. That would not have touched your fine heart, Bess ; but Larry is not true to himself always, and we urged and helped him to be false. Forgive us both ; Katie will ask you too, sometime—I do *now*."

Larry's voice trembled, and his eyes were full of tears, as he answered :

"I do, Nell dear ; but God only knows what you have lost me."

Until that moment he had never seen or known the opposition his sister spoke of ; if he had, it would have been like chaff before the wind of his own pleasure ; but he accepted excuses for his faults and evil deeds, as he would have done any other sacri-

fice he could wring from others, and being at this time actually in search of some, he clutched at this presented, with avidity.

"But, Larry," his sister went on, and her voice was scarcely more than a clear whisper, "Juliet never wronged you; she thought that in giving you her love, she blessed you with the one strong wish and prayer of your existence. For the sake of pity and mercy, be true and kind to her, poor girl, poor injured girl that she is! Oh, Larry, I could not die till I had held your hand in mine, and heard you promise me this. It is the last favor I shall ever beg of you. Say that you will be kind and true to poor Juliet as long as she lives. Kneel here, and promise me this"——

Larry instantly obeyed; but as he did so, he glanced sideways at Bess, with a half smile, as he waited for the words.

"I promise my poor little sister Nelly," she said, and he repeated them after her, still with the questioning look on his cousin, "that I will never speak harshly nor act unkindly or falsely, to my wife Juliet while she lives. And it may be easier to keep than you think," she said. "She may not trouble you long."

She sank back, and Larry rose and kissed her.

"Thank you, and God bless you," she murmured softly.

Bess came near her, and she partly closed her eyes, but held her hand out that Bess might take it.

Could she be sleeping? A long time seemed to pass without a change or motion; Larry still leaned forward, watching them both, and Bess silently, solemnly counted the fluttering pulses that dragged or flew under her fingers.

Berkely came in, by-and-bye, but paused near the threshold, and came no farther. She seemed suddenly to wake and look bout her. In another moment she sat up, and said eagerly:

"Are you ready? Where's my dress?"

Bess said: "What is it, Nelly dear? We are all here, you see. Shall I call your mother?"

"No, certainly not; mother would never consent to stand in tableaux, you know. Come here; you and Berkely first, as bride and bridegroom, then we will arrange ourselves afterwards. The Bridal—it's Katie's idea, and I think it so pretty! where's

your veil? Berkely, take her hand; support her—you know how they do in pictures?"

In her wandering fancy she was so eager, that she almost rose in bed, and leaned forward, drawing them nearer, and joining their hands.

"Oh, Bess, Bess! why do you wear black?" she went on, in a distressed tone; "but we can change that; there, that's perfect."

Berkely and Bess stood side by side before her; Bess was cold and white as marble, but Berkely's face glowed with a sudden light, and he threw his right arm round her, and held her close to his heart.

"What God has joined together, let no man put asunder," Nelly uttered, in a clear loud tone, her hands spread out, as if invoking a blessing.

"Uncle Terry, draw the curtain," she cried; "the picture is ready." And then she fell backwards on her pillows.

Her mother opened the door.

"Is she easy?" she whispered.

"Come in, mother," said Larry; "her mind's gone."

"Gone!" she caught the word, "who's gone? what's gone? Nothing but clouds and night and sorrow!"

Bess stooped and raised her tenderly.

"Is it near morning?" she asked, softly.

"No, darling, we have but just lighted the lamps," Bess answered.

"Yet it is nearly morning." Her voice was calm and full of music now, the fit of confusion was past, and she looked out upon them all serene and lovely.

Her mother, with a terrible consciousness that the moment she had dreaded so long was come at last, sank on her knees close beside her, and cried out in the anguish of her soul:

"Oh, Nelly, my darling, my own Nelly, don't leave us, don't leave us!" and buried her poor bowed head in the pillow where she lay.

The light hand, that was so delicate and wasted, that it seemed scarcely earthly, fell gently on her forehead, and she strove to raise it.

"It is a cloud, a darkness; you will come out into the light again; you are not utterly bereaved." She spoke now so faintly and gasped so, that they closed around to catch the words. She pointed to Bess and Berkely, then to Larry, and finally said, with a great effort: "Try to kiss the rod. The God of Abraham praise"——

Barnes stood in the doorway, her look caught him and drew him forward. They made way near her, and she said, "Sing."

They all sunk down at the word. Such songs are prayers:

The God of Abraham praise—

distinctly and clearly she joined in that first line—it was the last sound she ever uttered on earth.

Barnes' eye, as he sung, first saw that she no longer heard him, and so he rose and softly stole away, leaving the bowed hearts to the sacredness of their own bitterness.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BESS'S FRIGHT.

When Katie heard of her sister's death through Larry, about an hour after its occurrence, she was fearfully shocked, and gave way to more feeling than her family had ever known her exhibit before. Abandoning the grandeur of West Park, she came home again to her old room and old ways till after the funeral. Larry and she were apparently the most grief-stricken of the family. Mrs. Morrison's blow sank too deep for words or tears, and Bess was quiet and busy, and seemed without eyes or ears for any one but her aunt.

The room above stairs was closed and deserted; it had been the one point of interest in the whole household for nearly a month past; now the blinds were drawn, the door locked, and

the beautiful figure on the bed, composed and silent, left alone unwatched and untended for the first time.

They were all in the dining-room. Mrs. Morrison, pale, worn, and in Ellen O'Toole's phraseology, very "ill-like," sitting with her hands folded before her, and neither heeding nor taking part in the arrangements that Katie and Larry were busy making for the future. Berkely and Joseph Waters were talking apart in a low tone about the time and place of burial, and Bess was making a bowl of gruel for her aunt, which she presently brought and tried to induce her to swallow.

"I would, dear, if I could," the poor woman said, sadly; "but something rises and fills my throat whenever I strive to do it. Maybe I will by-and-bye."

"No, dear aunt, just take one mouthful, please, not for itself, but the strength it will give you."

"It's not in the like of this to give strength, Bess. What I need is the spirit to resign myself to God's will, and cease to rebel. It will come to me in His mercy by-and-bye."

The poor, white, pitying face looking down at her, touched her now; so she took the drink, and made the effort to swallow a little, saying kindly:

"It's very good, dear, and would tempt me to eat if anything would, I'm sure."

"Berkely, cannot I have that little museum-room of yours over the stairs?" asked Larry, suddenly. "You don't need it, and there's a sofa there I can sleep on."

Berkely looked up in amazement, and Katie said:

"Why, Larry, you never could get along with that little closet; it's nothing more, and there are other rooms where you can be comfortable."

"It's my choice of the house," said Larry; "the only place I shall take in it. What do you say to it, Berkely?"

"I say you shall have your choice by all means, though I reserve the privilege of marvelling at it," he answered, in a cold, surprised tone.

"Then it's arranged, and you shall wonder as much as you like," said his cousin.

The door-bell rang.

Ellen passed through the dining-room on her way to answer it.

"Shall I say ye'll see who iver it is, Miss?" she asked of Bess.

Thinking it must be Charlotte Waters, and knowing her horror of Larry, and the misery of their meeting just then, she said:

"Yes, in the parlor; light it, please."

Ellen came back after a few moments.

"A lady, and she'll not kape ye but a minute, Miss."

"Berkely, Katie says you bought a place for my mother at Oak Hill," said Larry, as Bess left the room; "is it anything of a house? The neighborhood's cheerful, I know, and it's but a quarter of an hour's drive from town."

Mrs. Morrison made a gesture of distress at the theme Larry had chosen, and hid her face with her handkerchief.

"It was your uncle's purchase," Berkely answered, in a low tone, "and the house is a very good one, I think."

Larry drew his chair nearer.

"A change after what has happened here cannot be injudicious. Katie and I think it would be well to dress up Oak Hill into a family-seat. Don't we, Katie?"

Berkely glanced at his aunt; she was rocking herself slightly backwards and forwards, with her face still covered.

"She is scarcely able to discuss that yet," he said; "we can wait awhile."

Katie took out her handkerchief, and beginning by wiping her eyes, ended by sobbing a little, while Larry looked so subdued and sad, that compared to him Berkely seemed a picture of stony indifference.

"One should conquer selfish grief when the comfort of others is in question, I know," said Katie, struggling for composure.

"Mother, will you not lie down, if I arrange those pillows for you?"

"I think I will go up to my own room, dear," Mrs. Morrison returned, rising. "I leave it all to you, only let everything be as she would have wished it, if you can."

She looked towards Berkely and her son-in-law, who answered her by bending their heads in acquiescence. Then she paused near Larry's chair.

"If you think I'm one of them fool-bodies that want to fly from trouble or the Lord's dispensations, however weak I may be to bear them, you mistake your mother, Larry. The two silent voices, the two empty seats, the two lost treasures, only make the old place dearer. Thank God, I can feel that the day will come, if He spares me to see it, when the bitterness and sting of sorrow will fade into quiet memory, and I can rejoice in recalling all I've lost—I've felt it before—and in His own good time, I trust to feel it again. None but them who can see in their own evil consciences the secret of their pain, need fly from grief, Larry Morrison."

He winced under his mother's words, and turned round in his chair. "You don't know my meaning, mother," he said, "and I shan't trouble you now by explaining it."

"You're right, I have neither the mind nor thought for such things now. Good night to you all, and God bless you."

She put out her hand to open the door, when it unclosed, and Bess came in, and crossed the floor and sat down where her aunt had been sitting, and clasping her hands together with a strong effort at self-control, looked down upon the carpet.

"Was it a stranger, Bess?" Katie asked, presently, looking up astonished at her cousin's frightful pallor.

Bess, startled at the question, looked from one to the other irresolutely, and then said, with an effort, and faltering at every word:

"No; it was a person who came to see me about—about business."

Katie took out her watch and looked at it, then at her husband.

"It is nearly eleven, Joseph," she said; "and time for you to go. What an odd hour for your business people to choose, Bess!"

But Bess did not seem to hear her; she was looking steadily at the wall beyond Larry's head, and her eyes were wild with some inexplicable feeling.

Berkely rose and went towards her.

"Will you not try to rest to-night?" he asked. "You must learn to consider yourself for the sake of other people. You have so much to do, you must keep the strength to do it."

She rose mechanically, and seemed to try to smile to assure him of her compliance. Katie leaned back in her chair, and watched her as she moved about, putting things to rights, lifting and laying the same things a dozen times over, and seeming the more disturbed, in her effort to appear at ease.

Joseph Waters departed, and Berkely went out to close the hall door after him. Larry gathered the papers strewn on the table into the portfolio and closed it up.

"What is the matter with you, Bess?" exclaimed Katie. "Look at the girl! she is demented."

Her cousin's words did not serve to re-assure her, whatever her perturbation, and as Larry, following Katie's exclamation, looked at her, she was trembling so that her hand, resting on the marble chimney-piece, clutched it for support. He jumped up quickly and ran to her side.

"What is it, Bess? Oh, tell me what it is that troubles you! See, she's growing faint—she's falling! Good heavens, this seems like death!"

It was not in Katie's way to be startled by fainting fits, but there was something so terribly real in the ghastliness that fell upon Bess Saunders' face, and the utter prostration that seized her form, that for once she was frightened out of her coolness, and cried for Ellen O'Toole to come with water quickly.

"It was that precious Charlotte Waters, I'm sure, with some new version of horror," she said to Larry, as he tried to raise her. "I hate that woman, and she knows it, and lets me alone."

"See," said Larry, only intent on the white face in his arms; "she is cold as ice itself; get hot brandy—do go, Katie; don't trust to that clodhopper."

He had placed her on the sofa, still holding her in his arms, when Berkely opened the door, and at a glance turned nearly as white as Bess herself.

How did it happen?" he asked, breathlessly; and Larry, closing him out by placing himself in front of the sofa as he gathered the pillows under Bess's head, answered deliberately:

"She has fainted, you see."

Berkely stood an instant, waiting to catch his cousin's eye, who, presently glancing over his shoulder, gave him the opportunity, then he caught him by the arm and thrust him aside, as if he were polluted.

"Don't touch that girl, Larry Morrison," he said, below his breath, for the door was open, and Katie and Ellen were busy in the next room heating brandy. "You know in your soul your touch is poison to a true woman!"

Larry's look told Berkely how his cousin received this, but he said not a word in reply; and neither of them had time to speak till Katie brought the glass with warm liquor and gave her some to drink.

She could not swallow, and at last Katie desisted in her attempts to make her, and said:

"She is very ill; you had best have Doctor Windell come at once."

For a moment, Larry looked at Berkely, and Berkely at Larry—like the two mothers before Solomon, they both strove for one love. Larry's was false, for he did not stir; and Berkely, dropping the cold hand he held, laid back the still marble-like face upon its pillow and left the room; in a moment or two the hall door closed loudly, and he was hurrying on his way to Grove Street.

Dr. Windell came back with Berkely after a very little while; he had been there early in the evening, just after poor Nelly died, and Berkely had a momentary difficulty in making him understand this second summons.

"Miss Saunders," he repeated, struggling into his great coat. "What under heaven can it be? not hysterics, for she's not the style, you know."

Yet, when he saw her, despite his former impression of her strength of mind and will, he almost inclined to that opinion.

She was only partially conscious, and seemed to refuse to be

come wholly so, for, when she opened her eyes, she would be seized with a shuddering that was painful to see, and instantly relapse again.

"Have her taken up stairs; the gas-light flares here, and that woman shakes the floor as she walks;" the doctor said this, alluding to the heavy tiptoeing of poor, sympathetic Ellen, who was evidently in the most explosive state of interest and attention.

Bess roused herself at this, and drew a shawl, Katie had thrown over her, closely round her shoulders. She was neither composed nor entirely conscious, but she seemed to know perfectly that she was to leave the room, so she rose and tried to speak, though her teeth chattered as if she were in a chill.

"I can go alone easily, and I'll try to sleep; that will make me quite well, I know."

Nelly had died in the great front room where her uncle was waked. It had been her whim, weeks before, to be carried thither for light and sunshine—and so into her own lonely room, long untenanted, for her nights had been passed on a lounge beside Nelly's bed since she had first been very ill, poor Bess, clinging to the bannisters, crawled; while Katie followed with the light.

"There has been some cause for this illness, Bess, if you choose to tell it," said her cousin, as she brought a wadded gown out of the wardrobe and helped her cousin to undress. "I don't expect confidence from you, Bess; you are so naturally secretive, that would be too much; but one would suppose I might have some slight reason to know what occurs in my mother's house the night of my only sister's death."

"I have nothing to tell—I am ill—worn out—I must rest—I must be quiet." This was all Bess would say in reply, and this she said in gasps, and motioned her cousin towards the door.

"How does she seem?" asked Doctor Windell, meeting her as she came out on the landing.

"As perverse and inexplicable as it's possible for a woman to be," answered her charitable cousin, as she stole softly down to

join Larry in weeping over the loss of a sister that neither had truly loved, and planning the future of a family whose present they had oftened rendered miserable.

"This is Bess's house, you know; and as long as mother remains in it, there will be no real independence for her or us. Fortunately, this place at Oak Hill can be put in good order with what Uncle Terry left, and then Bess will find that she is no longer queen of the mansion and ruler over us all." This was Katie's final conclusion, as they sat together, nearly an hour after the doctor had gone up to Bess's room; and Larry, discovering it was almost one o'clock, proposed to go to bed.

As they went out into the hall very softly, lest they should make a sound that would rouse their mother, they met the doctor coming as silently down, lighted by Berkely.

"Good heavens!" cried Larry. "I thought I heard you go an hour ago—at least the door closed then; is Bess worse?"

"Your cousin is better—but you were mistaken; I was here all the while; Mr. Berkely Morrison went after some medicine."

"You're sure Bess is better?" asked Larry, again looking at him doubtfully. The doctor did not immediately reply, but returned the look with one so odd, so indefinable, that Katie could not for her life read its meaning; then he said:

"Oh, yes, quite sure; she's undoubtedly better."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

DOUBTS.

So she was; as transpired the next morning, when Katie, who neither well nor strong, looked pale and exhausted, and entirely unable to see condoling friends, was obliged to lie down after breakfast. Bess, though not looking in the least like her old calm self, was yet able to go through her usual share of the du-

ties and cares of the household, and receive such visitors as it was impossible to avoid seeing. Mrs. Morrison was her essential care, but even she saw her changed face, and questioned her as to its cause.

"Katie says you took a weak spell, last night, and were very ill, dear," she said; "I think it was unfeeling in you not to call me; I would have been glad to come."

"I am quite well now, aunt," Bess returned, and strove to drive her from the idea; but Mrs. Morrison persisted, and accused Berkely of carelessless in not sending for her.

"You know, Berkely, that Bess needed care when she fainted, as Katie says she did, and you sent for the doctor and never let me know."

Berkely felt, that whatever had been Bess's trouble, he was not to know it, yet helped her to avoid having it probed, and made light of the attack of the night before. He was still endeavoring to assure his aunt it was nothing but want of rest, when Ellen said Dr. Windell was waiting for Miss Bess, and she left them in great haste and with a rising color.

A strange, selfish pang he had never felt before shot through Berkely's heart as he marked this, but he crushed it in a moment more, and thinking that the hour had come for his appointment with Mr. Waters, hurried through the hall, and took down his cloak from the rack. As he put it on, the parlor-door was ajar, and through the reflection of the great mirror above the hearth, he saw Bess Saunders catch Dr. Windell's hands both within her own, and fall weeping upon his shoulders.

"Selfish, contemptible fool! what an agony your wounded self-importance gives you! Because another shares the trust you were so proud of, you are trying to doubt the goodness of an angel." He said this to himself as he went down the steps and out into the street; and he said worse than this as he walked along down to the closed counting-house of Katie's husband, for it took this and all else he could say, or think of, in the same vein, to fight himself out of the wretchedness the sight of the beautiful head he so worshiped lying on another man's shoulder gave him.

For he had grown to love this woman with all the matured intensity of the first strong passion of his life. He had always been a lover ; it was his weakness to adore something, but being out of the range of womanly beauty, for years Bess's rivals had been the heroines of story, pictures, names, ideals ; and he had never known a real, true love till Bess Saunders woke the feeling out of his strong interest and compassion for her fate.

Then he had begun to love her without knowing it or desiring a return, and finally it had become the one master thought and passion of his existence, though he had never sought by word or look to tell her so or have her know it. He was content to think that fortune and association had linked them closely to each other, and bless the happy bond. This, then, was his first awakening to doubt and pain, and he accused himself of foolish hopes, mean exactions, and selfish thoughts ; to arraign her was not part of his love ; whatever of fault or wrong there was must be with him. She of necessity was perfect.

Poor Nelly ! he thought of her wandering mind and the tableau she had arranged with her dying hands, and his heart bounded again. " A selfish heart," he acknowledged, " to bound or grieve at things like these, when the shock of death is newly felt by all the rest." To subdue such a busy contest between hope and fear, he strove to bring his mind back to the trouble of the present solely, and whenever the picture of Bess in the parlor leaning on the doctor's arm flashed like a painful memory on him, he drove it back by bitterly acknowledging, " She is right to have another friend, a man of greater mind and heart than I, worthier her trust and confidence."

So Berkely met Joseph Waters, and they together ordered all things fitting for poor Nell's last rest, and rode home again to Burleigh Place to sit and talk in whispers with Katie and Larry in the solemn house, where a dreary sort of business went on towards the funeral.

" I think Charlotte Waters' conduct absurd, Joseph," said Katie in a tone whose lowness could not hide its anger. " You must speak to her, for I will not permit a scene here at this time."

Joe looked distressed beyond measure, and glanced furtively towards the door and then at Larry, for he knew his sister had pointedly refused to enter the apartment graced by the presence of her recreant nephew, and in his inmost heart he rather envied her freedom to thus express an aversion he shared with her, yet was forced to hide.

"She is peculiar, Katie," he murmured, softly and deprecatingly; "she always was. I remember she did something terribly startling, in just the same way, that poor John never got over. It was when she was a girl at boarding-school, and she came home for the holidays, when they were trying a man for strangling his wife, who tried to prove that she had hanged herself. Somehow, there was a lack of evidence, and the jury disagreed, so that he was finally acquitted. Well, John was taking us to the Chinese Museum, and as we passed the court-house, they brought the man out, surrounded by a guard; we were hemmed in by the crowd, and he had come quite close to us, when Charlotte shook her sunshade at him, and said aloud, 'But you killed that woman, you know you did.' I never saw anything like the distress of brother John; he couldn't endure a scene, and every one looked at Charlotte, whose eyes flashed as they do now when her spirit's up; for she had read the trial, it seems, and had her own opinion of how things were."

Mr. Waters then became suddenly aware that his anecdote had not been of a cheering or agreeable nature; Larry turned an ugly white, and bit his lip; Katie gave him a look that told much of her womanly rule and sway; and Berkely rose and went over to the window, where he mended a pen, that he had been biting, carefully for the next ten minutes.

"Miss Saunders is quite well again, I see," said the unhappy man, at length. "Berkely says she was very ill last night."

"Much better, at least," Larry hastened to say, as if silence were not pleasant to him; "she has seemed shocked and broken ever since Uncle Terry's death. Poor girl, this has been a dreary house this past year!"

She came in, looking very ghostly in her own pallor and the

added gloom of her mourning dress, and said their mother wished to see Katie and Larry in her own room, if they would go up.

When they obeyed, she sate down, and, shading her face with her hands, wept silently. She had been seeing the last dress her pretty cousin was ever to wear, and there was a painful association in the color that brought back the blooming beauty of Katie's bridesmaid, and made the change seem more terrible than it had done before.

Charlotte Waters never meant to make a scene, for she appeared as unconscious of Katie's coldness as she did of her brother's presence ; and when she had thought of all that she could suggest or do, went away again as quietly as she had come. Larry and Katie stayed with their mother, and Berkely and Joseph talked or kept silence in each others' company till tea-time ; but Bess was not herself, as her lover's vigilant eye saw plainly. Grieved and stricken to the earth, that was natural ; but nervous, trembling, starting at every sound, suddenly breaking into tears, and as suddenly conquering them, this was not like the Bess he had ever seen before, and so he watched her, wondering and distressed at the change.

When night drew on, and the family were all within their rooms, Larry came and stretched himself at full length on the lounge beside his stove, and fell to smoking a cigar and scattering the ashes for a pastime.

Now, he knew that Larry did not like him, that he even hated him, and was jealously suspicious of every kind feeling or good opinion he had won in the family ; and it was equally plain to him, that having an evil conscience, he was a coward, and could not sleep where there was no one stirring, or he could see no light or signs of life ; therefore he thrust himself upon him now, the other rooms being deserted, so Berkely did not value his society, and settled himself to read awhile, regardless of his presence.

The smoke made the air heavy.

"If it annoys you, open the door," said Larry, considerately. "I don't sleep well, and it's dull work lying awake, you know."

Berkely got up and set the door wide open; as he did so, a figure, wrapped in a long cloak, darted past and hurried down stairs, as the hall clock struck eleven.

"Who was that?" he was going to ask of Larry, but stopped himself, for the front door closed softly as he reached the window; and he drew aside his curtain and looked down into the street.

He was glad he had not spoken, for now he saw that the figure was Bess Saunders, and that she hurried, like a black shadow, over the snow in company with a man. Berkely looked again, and then dropped the curtain, and walked away, with his back towards Larry. Suddenly he turned, and said:

"I want to go to sleep, Larry; and if you'd rather stay here, I'll take your sofa, and go to bed in the next room."

Larry looked up lazily.

"Do," he said, "I'm tired and dispirited, so I shall smoke half the night, may be. That place will do capitally for a quiet fellow like you, but it's too cramped to smoke in. Leave me the key of that wine-cooler of yours; I want a glass of sherry."

Dropping it on the table beside him, Berkely betook himself to his new quarters, and putting out the light as he entered, flung himself into the great chair that Larry had appropriated from his store of comforts, and fell to thinking, with his head between his hands.

The dull misty grey of early morning came peeping slyly into his haggard face, still in the same position, and it mocked him by a reflection in the little mirror opposite. He had been keeping a dreary watch over his dying hopes, that he felt should never have lived at all, and trying to bury regrets and bitter disappointments that would rise again, despite the heavy stone he rolled upon their sepulchre, sealed with the word—unrequited.

CHAPTER XL

DUST TO DUST.

That it must have been a strange errand that called Bess Saunders out into the streets at midnight, while her cousin lay still unburied, Berkely could not deny even to himself, but that it was a right and proper thing for her to go, he neither doubted nor questioned. It was the thought that she had interests and feelings he dared not share, that she had sought another friend, and trusted him completely, was what stung him to the soul, and banished sleep and rest.

He met her in the hall as he came down; looking calmer and more at peace than he had seen her since Nelly's death, but very pale and exhausted.

There was something on her mind, for a faint flush dawned on her face as he spoke to her, and she hurried past him up the stairs, as if anxious to avoid his eye. He scarcely saw her again until a few hours before the funeral, when the weeping family gathered into the parlors, whither the coffin had been brought, to listen to the prayers and service for the dead.

By some strange whim, Larry shrunk from looking at the beautiful figure of his dead sister, and could only be prevailed upon through Katie's expostulations to come down with his mother to where it lay in virgin white, dressed like a bride. He dropped into a chair near the door; the rooms were filled—all the nearest friends, that had known the poor girl in childhood, were there, now bowed reverently in real grief, for Nelly had been beloved as such bright thoughtless creatures seldom are.

Berkely's mind would wander from the grand words of the service of the church, although he strove to check it. He saw the long, black coffin, and marvelled at its length, she seemed such a little thing, as Joe Waters always called her. He felt glad to see the Daceys and the Parkers and the Littles all dressed in mourning, make a goodly show of respect for her, and

noted the solemn faces of the young men, shocked to see for the first time the awful change wrought in the once gay beauty. Then he thought of Mr. Little being dressed for a school-boy, and could almost see Nelly fastening a tow wig on his head, and being horrified at such a recollection, forced himself back to the words, "ere the evil days come, and the days draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them." But suddenly, he saw that the coffin trestles rested on the very spot of carpet where Nelly had stood when he first saw her; he remembered her little foot, with a rosetted slipper, in that wreath of purple flowers, tapping them as she leant her hand upon the marble of the chimney-piece and talked to him. He checked himself only to lose himself once more, recalling all the faces he saw about him in different ways, and always in expressions strangely opposed to those they wore now. He brought his eyes and thoughts back to the coffin. Changed in every feature so that they who had known her best could scarcely trace the face they used to love, Nelly was still beautiful, though now it was a dead beauty, cold and almost impalpable. It was not a shroud she wore, nor yet a dress. She seemed rather to be enwrapt in a cloud of something exquisitely soft and white, that hid the wasted outline of her form, and showed only the delicate little hands that held in their loose grasp upon her bosom a handful of snow-drops. Berkely started as he saw the flowers, and remembered that Barnes had come an hour ago, and placed them there, unconsciously fulfilling Uncle Terry's Christmas dream.

"Let us pray."

Then they all sank down together, bowed in heart and spirit, at the throne of Him who chasteneth whom He loveth.

"Almighty and most merciful Father, who hath been pleased in Thy wise providence to remove our young sister from us."

Tears and sobs and one pitiful, heart-broken cry from the poor mother, entered Berkely's compassionate soul like a sudden wound, and not being too wise or self-sustained to pray, he threw himself in supplication at the feet of God, and prayed for strength and the consolation of His love for the dear aged head sunk so low beside him. He raised her at last, and held his arm

around her as she almost fell upon her dead child for a last embrace. Her son was not there; he had slipped quietly away when the prayer began, for it was not in his way to be at home with sorrow.

Mrs. Morrison's hands tightened around the coffin when Berkely strove to draw her away, and Katie sank upon her husband's shoulder, sobbing violently. Gently but firmly Bess loosened the fingers that clasped the dead, and Berkely and she together bore the fainting mother from the room. The white plumes of the hearse were waving in the street below, the carriages were gathering, and the hall was filled with gentlemen in streaming black hat-bands as they took her up the stairs, meeting Larry coming down, rather flushed, and with strong flavor of wine upon him.

Into the desolate front chamber they all assembled, and Katie came and laid her head, weeping, in her mother's lap, with a touch of nature in her trouble that was new and beautiful. Bess sate beside her, holding her hand in hers, but not speaking. At last there came that subdued noise and bustle of moving feet out of the hall, and the hearse creaked slightly under the burden it was to bear, and slowly started on its way. Carriage after carriage drove up, was filled, closed and drove on again, till by-and-by the whole procession started and solemnly rolled out into the main street, over the bridge, across the river to that strange new country, where friends meet without greeting—the burial ground.

"Never heed me, children dear," said Mrs. Morrison, to her weeping daughter and niece. "It's a selfish sorrow that begrudges heaven an angel. I'll not be long behind Nelly, and I wish and pray this day that I may be as ready and willing to go as she was, when the call comes."

CHAPTER XLI.

OAK HILL.

THE day after the funeral, by slow degrees, the story of Juliet was unfolded to her unhappy mother-in-law, to whom it was less of a shock than they thought it would be. One great loss swallowed all slighter blows. She was distressed, but not so humbly bowed by it as Bess had dreaded.

It was certainly one comfort in the somewhat uncongenial life led by Joseph Waters, Esq., that he looked upon the chief engineer of his domestic misfortunes as a singularly gifted woman. "So strong and clear on all subjects," as he confided to Bess, after she had seen her aunt sitting quietly talking to Larry of his loss, "so very strong and clear, in fact, that I really am ashamed of my own weakness and confusion at times. I have been quite cut up by late events, you know. Juliet's terrible end—but I beg your pardon, I see I pain you by an allusion to it—then Nelly's loss, which, as the clergyman so properly said, was her gain ; and to tell you the truth, all things considered, I am exceedingly glad to have the advice of such a woman as Katie."

"Do you mean in any particular direction ?" asked Bess, quietly, but seriously, for she saw by the peculiar embarrassment and change of color he was subjected to, that Mr. Waters had been urged to the discharge of some unpleasant business connected with the family.

"Why, yes, to be sure," he broke out desperately, "as I was just about to tell you, my dear Miss Saunders, Katie is of opinion that it is actually necessary for the health of her mother, and the peace of the family, that you all go to Oak Hill to live for a while, and let the dreary associations with this old house die out of your minds."

Bess's face grew still more grave and serious.

"Have you spoken of this to my aunt ?" she said.

"Well, I believe Katie has mentioned it, but not meeting with much encouragement, expects you to urge it more successfully."

He knew as soon as he had finished speaking that this was by no means what he intended to say, and so he looked in great perturbation towards his wife, who just entered the room in full street-dress prepared to return with her husband to their home in West Park.

Katie gave him a vexed glance, but came forward with an amiable air, and putting her hand on Bess's shoulder, said, kindly:

"Poor, dear Bess, you're really overwrought in body and mind, and need rest more than any one I know of."

"I shall have plenty of rest," said Bess, sighing drearily. "We are but a little household now. Your mother and Berkely and I—time will drag without occupation I'm afraid."

Katie looked at her with a quick glance of angry enquiry.

"You don't name Larry," she said; "is he to be ejected from the household?"

"I did not know that he belonged to it," said Bess, quietly.

"You knew he had none other, did you not?" asked Katie, sharply.

Bess bit her lips, and was silent—Katie went on:

"Larry, when he had the misfortune to make the wretched marriage, was as noble and promising a fellow as any sister could be proud of. It was his ruin in every way; the girl was demented from the first; her mother's family are all subject to fits of insanity, and she led him a pretty life, as we could see in the glimpse we had of his establishment in New York."

Mr. Waters winced and changed color at this summary disposal of his unfortunate niece, but said nothing.

"What has been done, can't be undone. Larry has but a trifle to boast of now in the way of fortune; what with losing at play at those German baths, while he left Juliet in one of her tantrums at Paris, and giving dinners, and drinking late and what not, to drown trouble, he's what might be called a ruined man. He's a widower now, thank heaven, with a chance to retrieve the past, and where, in the name of heaven, should he go to begin it his mother's door is closed to him?"

Bess still looked down, but said not one word.

"So you see that Oak Hill is the practical idea; there he will be away from city excitement, in a measure. You can keep up just that kind of society and merry making that he used to enjoy; never have the house dull or empty, or let him get bored thinking or brooding, and Larry will rise out of his trials and be a man again."

Bess, if she could have grown any paler than she was already, might be seen to do so, but she made no answer to all this.

"Might I hope that you would favor me with a reply?" Katie said, watching her with impatient anger.

"His mother, I think," said Bess, in a strange, constrained voice, "is the one to whom all this should have been said. Please wait till she is able to hear such things calmly, and then tell her your plans."

"Now," said Katie, losing all self-command, and looking around her in wrathful appeal, "I want to know if this girl isn't enough to drive one wild with her obstinate coolness? Doesn't she know, don't we all know that she has established such a selfish control over my mother, that she daren't decide for herself or even think without consulting her; and here she stands with the family welfare, the family credit and honor, I may say in her hands, and not one word of satisfaction will she give us."

"What is all this?" said Mrs. Morrison, coming in with a flush of astonishment on her pale face. "I thought you were gone, Katie."

Instantly Katie smothered her wrath, and calming her tone to one of quiet pleasantry, answered:

"I was staying to discuss Oak Hill with Bess, mother. I wish I could induce you to think of it before I go. I should be more relieved than I can express, if you would."

"Think of Oak Hill!" repeated Mrs. Morrison, deliberately. "We have a house there, thanks to Berkely, I believe, and the Warrens have been asking to rent it for the summer, when it's repaired. I'll think of anything you please, Katie, but what made you mention that?"

"The Warrens are fools," cried her daughter, impetuously;

"let them go to the sea shore as they always do in summer. Mother, we want you to see the necessity of taking all the family to Oak Hill, and making it a regular homestead, that we can all look to for a pleasant visit and family parties, and all that, you understand."

"I told you, Katie," said her mother, decidedly, "that as long as Bess was willing to keep me in this house, in this house I'll stay."

"Mother, listen to me a moment before you decide," Katie urged, earnestly; and then she went over the old story of Larry's misfortunes, even more pathetically, and threw into the scale of his losses the great gain of repentant experience. He was to live a new life, be a new man. What he had rescued from his gaming, drinking and betting debts, which she alluded to under the head of the indiscretions he was tempted into by his domestic misery, was to be devoted to the purchase of additional acres, the culture of which it would be his pleasure and occupation to superintend; and Katie eloquently pictured the handsome farmer at his chimney corner, his mother on one hand and the clergyman of the parish on the other, living a life of innocent usefulness, that would make him a blessing and a pride to all who knew him.

Tears must have washed all the mists and cobwebs out of the poor mother's eyes; she shook her head.

"I wish you may live to see that time, Katie," she said; "I never expect to."

"But you will go to Oak Hill," faltered Katie; "you'll leave this dreary place, and try to get cheerful among the buds and flowers of spring out there?"

"I will not, Katie. I told you before that this was my home, and has been for years; and Nelly's or your uncle's death will never make me fly away from it. There's room for Larry—though he seems bent on crowding your cousin Berkely's life out of his body by turning his room into a smoke-stack, and reducing him to dress in the hall closet. If he can stay and take his portion with us in our own way, he's welcome, and I'm sure Bess will say so too; but for a man that didn't know his own mind

once, and that broke up the hopes and good fortune of a household in one experiment, I never mean to give him the chance of scattering another. Lord forbid that I should sit in judgment on my own weak, ill-doing son! It is enough that what is done, is done. Let him work his way back, since he has lost it. When he makes the first right turn himself, there'll be many a hand stretched out to help him."

Katie looked at Bess; she was sitting with her back turned towards her aunt, her eyes were downcast, and she neither raised them, nor by any change of expression showed her interest in this decision. Yet Katie turned on her almost savagely.

"You're satisfied now, are you not?" she asked. "You were the first to commend this marriage of his, and insist on its being for the best, when we had time and ability to remedy it; but now, when the poor fellow needs all the help we can give him, when he stands alone, you contrive to find enemies for him in his own household, and his ruin will be on you, if to ruin he comes."

Bess got up, and with her hand upon her heart, as if it pained her, moved her lips and tried to speak, without succeeding in uttering a sound. Berkely had come in just as Katie began speaking, and half her venom was plainly meant for him, though he leaned against the chimney-piece and looked profoundly unconscious of its intent.

"Dr. Windell's in the parlor, and can he see Miss Bess, just a minute, he says," said Jenny, opening the hall door.

Bess's face changed instantly; a quick glow succeeded its fearful pallor, and her eyes brightened.

"Bid him come in here," said Mrs. Morrison, rising. "Katie," she continued, quietly turning to her daughter, "till you can speak as becomes your mother's daughter to Bess Saunders, never open your lips to her again."

"I'll go to him," cried Bess, eagerly. "Wait, Jenny, I'll go to him."

Berkely turned and walked out through the side yard into the street. It was a spring day, but the weather was drearily blowing and snowing, and he wore no overcoat.

It was not worth his while to leave the house to avoid Dr. Windell. He was standing impatiently in the middle of the parlor floor as Bess entered, and only gave a hasty nod of good morning before he rushed into conversation.

"She's still quiet; they're both doing well; and if you can come this evening, I'll wait for you," he said.

"Did she want to see me?" Bess asked, eagerly.

"Oh, very much; if she had not, I never would have left the important business of my morning visits to come here and tell you so; but I haven't another word to say. You can do all your talking when you meet. I cannot carry messages; it interferes with my patients' rights, you know. Good morning; I'll look in and see Mrs. Morrison when I call to-night."

He was gone so soon, that in the next turning his carriage overtook Berkely, who was walking swiftly on.

"Halloa," he cried, "this is wretched weather for a promenade; jump in, and I'll set you down where you will."

But Berkely, merely in pantomime, assured him that where he would go did not lie in the Doctor's way, and hurried down the next street.

That evening, when Larry and Berkely and Mrs. Morrison sate down to tea at their shrunken table, Jenny said again, "Dr. Windell," and instantly Bess sprang up, and made haste to meet him in the hall.

He was standing impatiently stamping the light flakes of snow from his boots on the map, and making all those demonstrations of chafing at an instant's delay, that seemed odd in a man who would spend a long night unweariedly watching the crisis of a fever, or attending the mean bedside of an obscure sufferer.

"At last," he murmured, resignedly, as Bess appeared. "I thought I should have the pleasure of spending an hour in the draught here; that woman of yours looks so implacably at foot-marks, that I didn't attempt to go into the parlor."

"I'm ready," cried Bess, in answer, catching up a cloak and hood that were hidden under one of the tall, old-fashioned, carved hall-chairs.

"Your aunt," said the doctor, hesitatingly, "will not she inquire where you are? You, who were always so thoughtful, seem strangely careless about suspicion now."

She paused and looked back at the dining-room door with a troubled expression of face.

"You're right," she said at last. "I seem to have lost all thought or power of contrivance. Let them think I have gone to Charlotte's, for I cannot go back now and tell them anything."

It was a wretchedly inclement night; the wind was blowing gusts of sleety snow round every corner; but neither the doctor nor she seemed to feel it, for they started out courageously, and walked away in the direction of Myers Lane, talking earnestly in a low tone as they went.

CHAPTER XLII.

LARRY'S HABITS.

"Did you say it was the doctor wished to speak to Miss Bess, Jenny?" asked Mrs. Morrison, after tea had been cleared away, and Berkely and Larry had sate brooding silently in different parts of the room for some time.

"Yes, ma'am," said Jenny; "and they went out together. I heard the hall-door close, and looked down the street after them."

"They're maybe gone over to Charlotte Waters together," said Mrs. Morrison, and she sighed deeply, and folded her hands together, as she sate in her easy-chair, very unlike the cheerful, busy woman she used to be, always with some pretense for occupation, although her tasks were seldom accomplished. Sighing heavily had become habitual to her now, and she would sit for hours with her hands folded and her eyes cast down, looking back into the past, and shrinking from the present.

"Miss Bess didn't go in the direction of Grove-street," Jenny

volunteered to inform them. "She turned jest the other way, and they was both a walking very fast."

Larry rose from his sofa-corner, and went over to his mother's side. When Jenny retired to her evening meal, in company with Ellen O'Toole, he said, keeping a keen eye meanwhile on Berkely, who had become very busy making notes with a pencil in his pocket-book.

"Dr. Windell is just the man I always thought Bess would fancy; but I don't think he'll make her happy in the end. Do you, mother?"

"Do I what?" she asked, sharply, turning on him with sudden rancor. "What new evil could you invent, if you tried, Larry?"

"No evil," Larry returned, quietly, still watching his cousin, "but simply a fact. Dr. Windell is an excellent man, and my Cousin Bess is old enough and wise enough to chose well."

"Your Cousin Bess has no thought of choosing, Larry," his mother declared, angrily. "She knows too well what she is to us all, and what we would do without her. She'll wait awhile till my troubles are over, before she takes a thought of such things."

Larry shook his head, and smiled sadly.

"It would be selfish as well as impossible to expect such sacrifices of Bess," he said, gently. "I saw it from the first, and thought you all did, too."

He looked innocently from one to the other as he said this, and his mother, greatly disturbed, appealed to Berkely.

"Had you ever such a thought about Bess, Berkely?" she asked. "I think Larry sees more than is before his eyes."

Berkely laid down his book, and came out of the shadow where he stood.

"I do not know," he said, slowly, and without any sign of perturbation, to Larry's great disappointment. "I don't think it right to make guesses about such a thing; but if it is so, I can imagine no two people more worthy of each other."

"'Deed then, I can," said his aunt, doggedly. "He's not my choice for Bess, though he's all I could wish as a friend and doc-

tor. I heard him tell once that some of his stock was German—either his father or his grandfather—and that's enough for me, there's no people I have as little leaning towards as the Dutch."

Larry laughed.

"Why, mother," he said, "that's simply absurd. They're a great people, and stand high as a nation."

"Let them stand as high as they will, Larry, I wouldn't begrudge them their heads in the clouds; all I say is, that I would never, of my own free choice, meddle or make with them."

Having thus avowed her views, his mother relapsed into silence and sighing once more; while Larry, determined to see how Berkely bore the idea he had striven to present to his mind, drew him into conversation on the subject of the Oak Hill improvements, and required, from his knowledge as a builder and improver, an estimate of the costs of refitting the establishment.

"For Bess dearly loves this old house," he said, "and when the time comes for a change—I don't say that it will come soon, they are both quiet, cautious people—this will be their residence. He will give up Grove street, and come here to please her, and Katie's idea of Oak Hill will be acknowledged a good one, after all."

He stole a sidelong glance at his cousin's face as he spoke, trusting to see him wince at the prospect, but Berkely only said:

"Very true," and looked as unconscious of pain or annoyance as if he had never had a different plan for Bess Saunders' future.

Patiently and quietly he followed Larry's guiding finger as it wandered over an outspread plan of the Oak Hill house, and suggested from his own experience an addition here, or a window there, as the case might be, and gave his views about the price of every thing that would be necessary to render it the handsome house Larry was determined to make it.

"Isn't Bess in?" cried Mrs. Morrison, starting up.

She had been dozing, and the striking of the hall clock, as it told ten, had roused her.

"Not yet," said Larry, hastening to reply, "but don't stay, mother, "I'll sit up for her."

"It's the first time in her life she ever required the service from any one, and I'll do it myself," she returned, "but although she settled herself quietly in her chair, it was plain that she was astonished at this unusual proceeding of Bess's, and not a little ruffled by it.

Berkely said good-night, and walked out into the hall on his way up stairs, just as the key turned softly in the dead latch, and Bess's voice was heard saying :

"I am sorry you have had such a long walk this wretched night, Mr. Barnes, but I'm greatly obliged to you for coming."

In another minute the gust of wind she brought with her extinguished the lamp that Jenny had placed on a tall chair for her, and she ran into Berkely's arms in the darkness, and uttering a shriek, started back, trembling with fright.

"It is only I," said Berkely, gently ; "I am sorry to frighten you ; I thought you saw me."

Hearing his voice, she clung to him an instant, and said in a tone of intense relief :

"Oh, I am glad it is you, so very, very glad ! I am weak and silly, and utterly without self-control ; forgive me."

For a moment he held her close, and felt the soft curls of her hair against his lips, and the wild beating of her heart against his bosom ; the next the door at the further end of the hall opened, and Mrs. Morrison's voice said :

"Is it Bess ? Well, I'll soon know where she's been this night."

He felt her tremble at the words, and heard her whisper :

"What shall I say, oh what shall I say ?"

Suddenly remembering Barnes' ability to present objects of charity, he said :

"Shall I say you went to see a poor woman who was ill—some one Barnes knows of ?"

"Oh, yes," she cried, "do, do ; that is right, do !"

"And is it for the sake of some worthless body, may be an impostor, that you kept us in such a state these three hours ?"

asked her aunt, in some displeasure, as she heard Berkely's account; "she must have been in a bad way, indeed, to have called you out such weather as this, with the wind blowing like mad. You're nearly dead, I'll warrant, and had better get to your bed at once, before you're worse."

She went back to call Ellen O'Toole to bring warm water being intent on a foot-bath, and charging Larry to come quickly with the light he held; he was fain to comply, leaving them alone together.

Gathering her damp cloak around her, she looked up for the first time, and Berkely saw by the lamp he had relighted, that her face was white and her eyes strangely large and brilliant as if with fever. An impulse to implore her for the sake of heaven to trust in him, was strong in his heart, but it did not reach his lips.

She thanked him earnestly for speaking for her.

"I am really not myself," she said, "but I have not lost my gratitude."

"You should be very grateful to a man whose devotion will even invent a lie to serve you," he said, bitterly.

"No, no: it was true," she returned, in excited haste. "I beg you to believe me, it was true, indeed it was."

She did not wait for another word, but bounded past him and ran up the stairs into her own room.

Larry had taken entire possession of his old quarters once more, and so Berkely, removing such articles as he held indisputably his own, had gone to occupy the bright and airy chamber that had once been Katie's and Nelly's.

Bess had tearfully put away the little cushions for the toilet, and other pretty nothings wrought by the delicate fingers that had done their task on earth, and there was nothing to remind him of his dead cousin but such little gifts as she had fashioned for him, and which he brought away with him from the invaded apartment that had once been his.

There Larry lay or lounged the night away in the full glare of the double gas burners, for the one strong feature developed in him by his late trouble was his horror of darkness and loneliness.

He was now always the last to retire, and apparently did the most of his sleeping in daylight, for his room was filled with contrivances to wile away the night ; books of fun and anecdote, comic drawings, solitaire games, etc., not forgetting a choice collection of wines and cigars, of which the apartment was at all times redolent. He had begun to show signs of these irregularities in his handsome face, that was gradually changing the character of its beauty and becoming a heavier, grosser style. That any outrage he should put upon his nature could destroy it, seemed impossible. It belonged to every feature, to every glance of his eye, every curve of his lip, as innately as the grace that was part of every careless motion of his hand.

Katie had alluded to his drinking and riotous living when abroad ; but when he first returned, he seemed rather to have been an invalid than a fast liver. That was the first shock of artificial excitement, and his color and strength gave way before it. Now he was existing daily with such a stimulant, and had grown florid, and looked something older than his years under its forcing system. The only curtailing he had done in the way of expenditure, that Berkely could see, was that he lived off his mother, and abjured New York society. There was a reason for that, he could guess. Those who had known the Waters, and had been accustomed to look on Juliet as a light-hearted belle and a beauty, were slow to realize the utter desolation that had fallen on her young life as being entirely causeless, and not accounting satisfactorily for the change, had agreed in rather cutting her lord. Thus it was quite possible that he had found the place uncongenial. As far as a pair of fast horses, kept at livery, went, and membership in one of the most fashionable clubs in the city, with suppers and dinners thereat, whenever Burleigh Place was dull, Larry Morrison kept up his old state, and becomingly clad in mourning, promenaded the gay streets, not lost to his old interest in their fair frequenters.

His mother, although she was keenly alive to the hollowness of his repentance, was not entirely free from the effect of the charm with which he had always swayed the whole family, and would add, after every rebuke she administered to his faulty ac-

tions, a private sigh and an under-tone reservation that "He seemed born to temptations, and might the Lord guide him into the right way, for he was sorely drawn from it by his own gifts."

To Bess his presence was constant martyrdom, but her quiet composure where he was involved puzzled even his keenly selfish eye to decipher.

That she rejected him in any and every light, except as his mother's son, he knew in his heart, and it was in part this very knowledge that made her charming to him. To win her, knowing that her soul revolted at the thought of him, was something to fire his waning energies, and Larry woke to his old scheming arts when he looked at her proud and womanly beauty.

"A girl to win and work for," he thought; "I was blind once to think of the other;" he shuddered even in thought, for "the other" was not a cheerful theme to him. He was afraid to think of the past, though he neither bewailed nor repented of it. Sometimes, as he turned this over in his mind, he acknowledged to himself that it was for the best that all had been as it had. "He had lost a year or two, and something of his freshness and spirits; but he had seen the world and gained a certain experience." The world he had seen was chiefly the recklessness of Parisian life among men of his own class, or the gambling excitement at the German Baths; and the certain experience was the wreck of poor Juliet's wealth, among which the fast horses might be styled a couple of items.

He rose late and breakfasted alone, for it was Bess's habit to elude him at these times, and be busied above stairs. Then he would take a turn at the morning papers at the club-rooms, drop in on Katie's morning receptions, her husband's business house, or Berkely's down town office, and saunter back for dinner. After that came his drive—the event of the day—in which he gained all the buoyancy that belonged to the monotony of such a life. Sometimes the family were not enlivened by his presence again until the next day, for he was often out at late suppers, and returned towards morning, with his latch-key as a means of admittance.

One morning Bess found him up unusually early, and breakfasting with the family.

"I have promised to drive Katie out of town a little way," he explained; and then he laughed softly, though not very pleasantly, to himself. "Do you know, I think Katie should have been one of those French women who made themselves famous by their finessing and intriguing, and all that? She is used to society now, and can't live without it, so she invents a plan for being religiously gay in her double mourning."

Mrs. Morrison looked severely at her son.

"Are you so in want of discourse, that you take to reviling the motives of your own sister?" she asked.

Larry laughed again, and this time more heartily.

"I'm admiring my own sister, mother," he said. "You are the one who do us both injustice. What could be brighter than her turning this rusting time to account, and cultivating the church people? Fashionable church people, too, who know a real gem when they see her, and so elect Katie one of a board of managers of the Orphan's Home. That's where I'm going to drive her this morning. There's quite delightful society at the Board, and Katie has won herself honors for her efficient services already. They're preparing a May Festival, to be for the benefit of the Institute, and she's invaluable there, you know."

No one ventured a comment on Katie's employment. She had not been to see them since the day of her proposition concerning Oak Hall, a fact that greatly distressed Bess. She had urged her aunt to go up to West Park with Larry, but received the one undeviating reply.

"When Katie wants to see me, she knows where I am, and if she's in no better mood than I saw her last, we had better be apart a while longer."

Bess now took occasion to press her again.

"Do go up to Katie's this morning, aunt," she said, earnestly, "if you only stay an hour or two, it will do you both good, and give me so much pleasure."

"What would take me up there, when she's going off with

Larry, as he says?" asked her aunt; but Bess, who saw in her tone some signs of relenting, urged her the more.

"She will only be gone an hour or two, and Larry will come for you after that, will you not, Larry?"

"I will promise anything you ask me to, Bess," her cousin answered, gallantly, "even to the half of my kingdom."

"It would be better, Bess," said her aunt, at length, "it would be better to send for her to come in the evening. Larry tell your sister to come down to tea. I desire her; and ask Charlotte Waters, too, Bess."

Larry leant back in his chair, and his brows came together.

"Confound that woman," he said, bitterly; "why should she be here?"

"Why?" repeated his mother. "I'll tell you why, Larry, and you can turn it over in your own mind, and think if you'll come, too. From first to last, she's been a steady friend—she nursed Bess through an illness that came near being her death, and she has shown us nothing but true friendship and warm feeling. Some of us have made her a bad return, and having wronged her and hers, feel hardly towards her; but if you and Katie sit down at my table to-night, you must sit down at peace with them that's at peace with me. We had an owre solemn guest lately to be having a merry-making; it's more like a sacrament of peace and good-will. Write a note for old Dr. Dacey and Dr. Windell. I want to bind up old sores, and if any of you ever probes the wound anew, it may look to you for healing."

Larry said nothing; he had a pretty clear idea that he had said enough already. Berkely went out, and Bess wrote four ceremonious little notes in her aunt's name, that one addressed to her Cousin Katie, being fully as much so as the rest, and Larry departed as messenger.

About an hour afterwards, as she was busied in the dining-room with her week's accounts, and the few extra preparations she was making for tea, she was astonished by her aunt's appearance with a large linen apron tied over her black dress.

"I am going to make a loaf of seed-cake," she said. "Dr.

Dacey will fancy it, I'm sure. Do you know, dear, I haven't done such a thing since before your Uncle Bernard died? The doctor was a young man then, and drank tea with us when Larry was dressed in a braided frock, and Nelly was a little thing in the nurse's arms." She sate down and shaded her face with her hand; large tears rolled over her cheeks, and fell upon the polished linen in her apron, as her heart went back to the pretty, rosy little creature, whose picture, as an infant, hung over the mantelpiece.

"Dear little Nell, she was her father's darling," she murmured. "She's at her heavenly rest now. Blessed be His name."

It was in this solemn vein she kneaded the seed-cake, and Bess, seeing that she attached an unspeakable importance to the occasion, prayed in her heart that Katie might come in the proper spirit.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A PEACE PARTY.

For the first time since Nelly's burial, the parlors were warmed and lighted that evening, and old Dr. Dacey came in and saluted his hostess with all the solemn ceremony the occasion required. Then came Charlotte Waters, who was not exactly herself, from the internal struggle she had undergone relative to meeting her arch-enemy, Lawrence Morrison. That she had conquered her repugnance in a measure, appeared from the civil, though not cordial greeting she extended to him; as for him, he met her as if there were no other feelings but friendship and sympathy in the wide world. Then came Katie and her husband, she very subdued, as one who had forgiven, though she scarcely dared hope to forget; he, earnest and demonstrative in his friendliness, as if to make up for the want of it in the rest. Mrs. Morrison, looking almost grand in her deep and quiet sorrow, tempered by

endurance, sate in state at the head of her table, where there were two vacant seats, and two places laid for guests that were not waited for. Katie dropped into the seat beside her husband, and saw that one opposite her where her sister had sate for so many years ; then she glanced at the empty chair at her mother's left hand, and tears—no common expression with her—forced themselves into her eyes. Her mother looked at her steadily and she returned the gaze, whilst Dr. Dacey said grace. Some one began to help her to the dainties.

"Touch nothing till you have tasted this," said her mother, holding a dish towards her. "It's a seed-cake of my own make, the first I've baked in over twenty years."

Katie took and ate it silently ; she knew her mother meant that in the breaking of that bread, there must be a bond of peace between them.

Dr. Windell had not come in when they sate down ; he now entered, and fell instinctively into the right place, beginning to eat as unceremoniously as if he had been there from the first.

He was the one cheerful element of the company, and through his influence, Larry and Dr. Dacey rallied into conversation, and a subdued kind of cheerfulness seemed to dawn on the party.

He told them odd adventures of his early life, for he had been an Eastern traveler, and had spent nearly ten years in going to and fro over the face of the earth. He challenged Berkely for Chinese information, and brought Larry out on Parisian themes.

"Were you ever at the Morgue?" asked Dr. Dacey of Larry, forgetting how mal apropos the question was to a man whose wife had drowned herself.

"No," he answered, hastily ; "I am not fond of such horrors."

Katie darted a quick glance at the doctor's placid face to discover if he meant to offend, and seeing that he was utterly oblivious of a double meaning, said, by way of change :

"But of all the fearfully interesting things I ever read, the life of that dreadful poisoning countess is the most so. I met a gentleman, some time ago, who had been abroad for years, and

in his portfolio of drawings, the faces of these celebrated female poisoners made quite a figure."

"What an odd taste!" said Charlotte Waters. "They were the Countess de Buvillers, La Foisin and Madame La Farge, I suppose."

"Yes," continued Katie, quite forgetting her recent consideration for Larry; "and the head of a handsome woman—some later monstrosity of nature—who was famous for having her rivals in love, or ambition, drop off one by one, without any explanation of the cause of their death. They found the body of a beautiful girl, supposed to have been drowned, but when they held a post mortem examination, they found she had really died by poison, and this fact led to the apprehension of the arsenic heroine, whose cruel mania fell very little short of Madame de Buviller's in the number of its victims."

"Take care, Mr. Morrison, take care, or you will ruin your mother's damask." It was Doctor Windell who spoke, and he addressed Larry, who had, at the commencement of the conversation, poured himself out a large glass of wine, but who, in raising it to his lips, had been seized with a nervous tremor, that scattered it in large drops over the snowy cloth.

His mother looked over at him in apparent displeasure.

"It's just what comes of having wine at a tea-table. Larry brought that fine idea home with him from France, for he never had it before. Now, he can do nothing without a glass of this, or that foreign stuff; half poison, I'll warrant it, and so seen on his nerves. I'm twice his age, but I'd be ashamed of myself if I had such an unsteady hand."

"He must pull up," said the doctor, carelessly; but his keen glance did not match his tone. "At less than thirty, a man has no excuse but fast living for such tremors; he'll come under my hands presently, I see."

The mere fact of a trembling hand or changing color being noticed in a party of such close friends, did not account for the dead-white anger of Larry's face as he listened. He was so choked with wrath that he found it impossible to speak clearly, and the few words he did utter, were of a character to make his

hearers thankful there were no more. He swore in a gasping sort of way at impertinent curiosity, and threw off the remainder of the wine with an attempt at ease, that took his breath and almost suffocated him.

Bess, in terror at this disagreeable feature in her aunt's effort to make a solemn reunion, began to speak earnestly on an entirely different subject, and Katie, disturbed for the sake of the family appearance, warmly seconded her in her efforts to restore a calmer spirit.

But Larry was not at ease; he looked covertly, from time to time, at Dr. Windell, and kept at a distance from him during all the rest of the evening. As a desperate effort for counter excitement, he went boldly up to the ottoman where Charlotte Waters sat talking to his mother, and asked her to tell him something about the new River Road.

"The old one is shamefully broken," he said, "and you drive so much, that I know you must be perfectly au fait with them all."

"I like that road," she said, sharply; "but pray, don't try it on that account; my tastes are not likely to suit you."

Without in any wise noticing her effort to repel anything he might say, he drew a chair near, and leaning on the arm of his mother's, spoke of the beauty of the early spring, and commended Charlotte's love of out-door life.

"Your little front garden on Grove Street is a delight to me in passing," he said; "that tiny fountain with its base of shells and the young blossoms just beginning to peep among them."

"Yes," she said, quietly; "I can easy imagine you absorbed in such innocent pleasures. You cultivate little pots of mignonnette in your own windows, do you not?"

"Indeed, no," said his mother, answering for him in good faith. "Larry is one of those who likes to look at complete beauty of any kind, but as to rearing or attending it, it would fare badly if it looked for it to him."

"And you think it possible he could neglect or injure helpless beauty?" Charlotte asked, bending her eyes sternly on him.

Larry felt that Juliet's aunt was looking at him, and he

blessed the chance that made his mother oblivious of her vengeful bitterness.

"I never knew him to bother with them, one way or another," said that placid matron; "any more than to make mention of them, as he did just now. But, Charlotte, do you know that Bess makes no a-do over flowers or the like, and I'm sure there's no want of feeling in her."

All three turned their eyes towards where she stood, and Berkely, who heard the words, looked also. She was standing before Nelly's picture, and Dr. Windell had joined her for the first time that evening. He had only time to say a few words, but her face glowed and her eyes brightened as she listened to them. Presently her lips trembled, and great tears gathered on her long lashes and rolled slowly down her cheeks.

"What can it be?" thought Larry, suspiciously.

"It's Nelly they're speaking of," was his mother's conclusion.

Berkely did not dare to think; and Bess, catching their glances, turned away quickly, and wiped the tears from her face secretly.

CHAPTER XLIV.

PENITENCE.

After that night, there was no apparent break in the friendly intercourse of the families. The Waters came often to Burleigh Place; and, once in awhile, Bess and her aunt went up to West Park and Grove Street. Larry was Katie's guest almost constantly, or, at least, he reported himself so in his mother's establishment, where his presence was only periodical.

The fact that there was, by some combination of circumstances, an end to all confidences and apparent sympathy be-

tween Bess and Berkely, was a delightful knowledge to him. Some intuitive perception of Dr. Windell's nature and habits made him fearless of him in the character of a rival, though strangely suspicious of him as an enemy. To hear of him being at the house during his absence, always threw him into a state of nervous trepidation, and made an instant application to his decanter of Burgundy, that stood on the side board, an apparent necessity. He would contrive to question Bess about him suddenly, hoping to throw her off her guard in answering; but the subject of these investigating remarks was always himself, and his habits, never anything that showed a consciousness of Bess being the object of the doctor's regards.

One night, returning flushed and a trifle excited from one of the long drives that Katie was always reported to share with him, he asked, suddenly :

"Was the doctor here?" adding, "I know he was, for I saw the carriage turn out as I came up."

"Yes," said Bess, quietly; "he came to ask about my aunt's head; it has ached sadly lately, and this morning I wrote to beg him to drop in on his rounds."

Mrs. Morrison was looking pale and ill, and lay back in her chair, with a bandage on her forehead, which her dutiful son had not yet noticed.

"What, mother, are you a patient?" he asked, seeing her attitude. "I'm sorry for you, but it is really a relief to think that man has something to come here about; he came here so often with no avowed object in view."

"Are you meaning Dr. Windell, when you say that, Larry?" asked his mother. "If you are, change your manner, for there is no better friend of ours lives, than he. I'm sure what he did for the dear girl that's gone, could not be told."

Larry threw his hat down, and called Jenny to bring his dressing gown.

"I'm thoroughly tired," he said, "and that man always puts me in an ill humor."

Berkely came in, looking pale and worn out

"You're working too hard, Berkely," said his aunt. "I thought you had made up your mind that business should never make you a slave again."

Berkely smiled, not very cheerfully, and then sighed with all his heart.

"It takes us a long time to learn our own minds, aunt. I didn't know mine then, it seems, or how necessary occupation was to its health. I shall go abroad again for a year or two, I think," he added, in a tone that showed the avowal cost him an effort.

Bess looked up, suddenly, and every shade of color died out of her face.

"Oh, Mr. Morrison," she faltered, "how sorry I am to hear it—" She stopped, hastily, and seemed to check her feeling. Berkely looked at her a moment, with a changed face, but the next both recovered their former manner, and relapsed into silence.

Not so Mrs. Morrison; to lose Berkely then, seemed to her a blow greater than she could bear, so she remonstrated with an earnestness and ardor that swallowed the recollection of the headache entirely.

Larry made no comment, but, considering this a favorable opportunity to take Bess at a disadvantage on the subject of Dr. Windell's interest in the family, asked:

"Was the doctor anxious about my nerves, to-day, Cousin Bess?"

"About your nerves?" she repeated. "I don't know what you mean."

"Then he allowed me to rest this time, and had nothing to ask about my tastes and habits, eh?" he went on, determined to make her give him her attention, the more so as he saw her eyes and thoughts were on her aunt and Berkely, who were still talking earnestly, the one dissuading, and the other reasoning about the voyage to China.

Bess brought her eyes and attention back to Larry, and considered his question a moment.

"No," she said; "I really cannot understand you. If Dr. Windell finds you so interesting a subject of question and surmise, he never shares this theme with me. I do not remember hearing him mention you at all."

"Baffled," he thought to himself; "but that man does mean me ill; I can see it in his eye when we meet, and I don't feel secure while he and Bess have these talks together."

Thinking this, he applied himself steadily to the Burgundy, while his mother and Berkely talked, and Bess listened, with her face shaded by her hand. He had come home at Nelly's death, with the one determined object of gaining from Bess Saunders a pledge to become his wife, not that he thought she loved him; he had read her heart in her words when they had spoken together alone, and acknowledged that there was no feeling there for him but dread and distrust; but his faith was unbounded where his own personal power was in question, and he trusted implicitly to his avowed repentance and her womanly joy in saving him from ruin at the price of self-devotion, and was convinced he should win her.

The prospect did not look so promising for it now, but his vanity would never allow him to think he had failed. He had lost his keenness to win, and must rally again—that was his conclusion.

He stretched himself on the sofa, and watched her through his heavy eyelids, that were beginning to close under the deadening effect of a long day's list of excesses.

She was looking very beautiful, and he swore a drunken oath to his own heart that she should be his, and then laughed inwardly at the worn and troubled face of the man he knew would gladly die for her sake, and whom he was rejoiced at the thought of thwarting.

Berkely could not rest that night, so he took to walking his floor softly, and going over and over again, in his own mind, Bess's hasty exclamation at his announced departure. It was the only one drop of balm in what was to him the bitterest cup he ever drank; but she had given him no other. Though he

watched and waited eagerly for other sound or glance that would show a second thought, she gave none, but had sat quietly listening, with her face averted, so that he could not read its meaning.

There was no light in Larry's room—he saw that as he walked out into the hall—and suddenly remembering that he had left him sleeping on the lounge an hour or two before, he bethought himself to go down and rouse him for his mother's sake—for his own, he would have let him lie till doomsday.

The light shone from the dining-room into the hall, and he heard voices speaking, through the open door. Leaning, as he descended, over the balusters, he looked down, to see Larry thrown into a half clinging, half suppliant attitude at his mother's feet, clasping her hand in his, and praying in a broken voice :

"Forgive me, mother, forgive and pity me. I love her in such a wretched jealous way, her coldness maddens me. I have always loved her, as you know, and her first rebuff drove me to that step that has sealed my life with misery ; now it is that which makes me strive to forget myself, even in this miserable oblivion."

"God pity and guide you !" she answered with feeling. And Berkely stole softly up stairs again, without making his presence known to either.

Another shade was added to the gloom of that long night for him, the fear that Larry would win his mother to a belief in his lying love, and that, in hope to save her villainous son, she might be brought to urge the sacrifice of her niece.

"I will speak to Bess," he determined at length. "I should have spoken long ago had there been the least ground-work for my presumption. When I tried to put it in words, it seemed so despicably selfish and unfounded, that I should have despised myself for uttering it."

Berkely's worst fears seemed realized next day by Mrs. Morrison's manner to her son. He was looking both pale and ill, and she was solicitous and kind, without a tinge of severity. At breakfast they were a silent party, Larry scarcely ate at all, and

his mother watched him sadly as he swallowed a cup of strong coffee, without milk or sugar, and saw his white, shapely hand tremble as he held it to his lips. He noted Bess's glance in the same direction, and wondered at its meaning, as he had often done before, for he saw that she shrunk from speaking or even being near her cousin ; but that she would look at him, when she thought herself unobserved, with such a strange, inexplicable gaze, that he could not solve, try as he would ; but which was neither made up of fear or dislike, but rather of pity, tempered with an odd interest or curiosity.

CHAPTER XLV.

VIOLENCE.

"ARE you going out to-day, Larry ?" asked his mother, gently. "I would rather advise you to seek some rest ; you had but little last night."

Her own hollow eyes showed that she had shared his vigil, and still watched with him in spirit.

"I will go to Nelly's grave to-day," he said, suddenly looking up, after a long silent perusal of his plate. "Will you go with me, Bess ?"

There was something like a prayer in his tone, and his mother's glance echoed it. Bess paused a moment, and then said slowly, and without feeling of any kind :

"Certainly, if you wish me to."

A little flash of triumph lit up the dead blackness of Larry's eyes, and for a moment they shone like living coals on his baffled cousin, for Berkely had plainly looked his objections to the plan ; then they drooped again, in a sad despondence, that was working havoc in his mother's tender heart.

"Go early in the day, the spring sun will enliven you both," she said, fondly ; and Berkely knew she added an inward prayer

for the reprobate, who had hung about her to such purpose the night before.

"I have something to do which will detain me till noon," said Bess, in the same unchanging tone. "I cannot delay it, so I must wait till then."

Berkely's desire to claim a moment's talk with her, left him suddenly as they stood together in the hall; a little later he was putting on his hat, and she standing beside him, with an odd confused manner, trying to put a simple question in a form to suit her.

"Are you going down town—I mean will you be up at Myer's Lane? No, no, I am very stupid—but do you think you shall see Barnes to-day?"

It seemed so unlike her to equivocate, or have a correct meaning, that it did not become her. Berkely turned away coldly and answered:

"I shall not go that way to-day," and left the house.

An hour later, finding that he needed to consult some papers for a business purpose, he started up in that direction, hoping to find Barnes, as it was the day on which he generally made the round of the buildings to collect rents. He had turned the corner of Myer's Lane before he remembered having told Bess that he should not be there that day, and wondering greatly why she desired to be informed on the subject, suddenly saw her walking on before him in a hasty manner, her veil drawn down, and every appearance about her of wishing to avoid observation. He started back at the sight, as if there were something appalling in it, and quickly turning the next corner, she was lost to view. He hurried to the turning to see in what direction she had gone before he decided that he had no right to watch her movements, but she was nowhere to be seen; and he returned, and went to looking after Barnes, as if he had succeeded in dismissing the subject from his thoughts, which it was not possible for him to do.

Having spent a half hour in looking and enquiring for his agent, he was turning homewards, having given up the task of finding him, when he saw him coming towards him in company

with Bess, both walking and talking eagerly to each other. When they saw him they both stopped short, looking very much startled at the encounter, and Barnes said :

"I'm afraid I have been giving you trouble, Mr. Morrison. I should have been here, I know, but the business I was attending to was really important, and I trusted you would spare me an hour or two."

"Certainly," was all Berkely said, and he bowed to Bess, who went on without stopping to speak, after hastily returning it.

That afternoon there arose a sudden and violent spring-storm, and when Berkely came home to tea, the wind was blowing like a tornado ; the streets were clouds of dust, and the heavens were black and threatening. He found his aunt in great perturbation.

"They'll be lost in the storm, lost entirely," she cried, wringing her hands ; those horses of Larry's are all fire, and his hands are not steady at the rein—I saw that when I rode with him."

Berkely turned on his heel and caught up the hat he had laid down.

"Do they go the main road ?" he cried.

"No, no," answered his aunt, highly approving his plan of going to the rescue. "I heard Bess ask him to drive by the river."

As he rushed down the steps again, and turned out into the main street, the rain came down in great gusty drops, and the thunder rolled and rattled fearfully.

It was but a block to the nearest livery-stable, and in ten minutes he was on horse-back, dashing out for the River Road in a furious storm of rain and thunder and lightning. If his horse had cared as little for the elements as he did just then, it would have been a much easier ride for him than it was, but at every flash the startled beast reared and nearly threw him ; and before he had her quieted from the effect of one gleam another threw her on her haunches.

In the blinding rain he saw carriage after carriage dash madly by, hurrying home out of the storm, but he was half way to the

cemetery on the broad, smooth road that wound by the margin of the river, yet could see nothing of Larry or Bess.

"They have wisely taken shelter somewhere," he thought at length. "Reckless as he is, Larry would hardly dare this weather with such a pair as his," and he had almost turned irresolutely when he saw the plunging, foaming, frightened beasts just before him, with Larry half drawn from the carriage in his efforts to restrain them. Shouting to him to keep his hold, he sprang to the ground and caught their heads firmly by the bit as they descended from a desperate plunge, and held them down with all his strength, while Larry jumped from the carriage. A terrible flash of lightning broke upon them. Berkely's horse cowered under a roadside tree like a human creature in dread—and Larry's two almost lifted him from the ground in their terrified bounds. The next instant he dropped the rein, for it showed him the carriage was empty.

"In the name of heaven where is Bess?" he cried.

Larry, upon whom the storm had acted almost as painfully as upon the horses, seemed beside himself with fear, and muttered in a frightened way:

"That he could not tell; she was mad to act so—she had certainly gone mad—that was all he could say."

Berkely let the horses jump and plunge as suited them, and laid hold on his cousin with might and main, shaking him fiercely enough to throw off all his tremors for a time to come.

"Speak, you cowardly hound," he almost shrieked; "tell me what you have done with her, or I'll choke you where you stand."

Larry proved his perfect right to the title Berkely conferred on him, by losing every semblance of courage or manhood, as he stood gasping before him.

"Let me go," he muttered, cursing him under his breath. "I know nothing about her. It was before the storm began I lost sight of her. I had something to tell her, and she grew contrary and wouldn't listen. I tried to make her, and she became wild, almost mad, and tore me (his dress was disordered and his cravat gone; Berkely saw it as he spoke), then she clutched the reins, and jumped out, and ran, the devil knows where, I don't. I

tried to go after her, but they wouldn't stand, and she flew off among the trees; I've been going up and down in search ever since, nearly losing my life with these mad devils, that seem to have caught her spirit."

Waiting for no more, Berkely was on his horse and off, calling back, "Don't go home till I bring her," feeling sure that Larry would obey this last injunction, as it was not his style to dare the wrath and horror of his mother by the announcement of Bess's loss. Only once he turned aside before he reached the broad arch of the cemetery, and that was when he saw a little cottage near the road, and a girl peeping from the open window in admiration for the grandeur of the storm. "She had not seen a lady," she answered his inquiry; "though she remembered the gentleman with the fiery pair of bays going by with one early in the afternoon." In a few minutes more he was among the graves, and saw that his instinct had been true. There, cowering under the marble monument that was inscribed as sacred to the memory of Terrence Blake, also to Ellen, youngest daughter of Bernard and Margaret Morrison, crouched a figure whose black robes were heavy with rain, and from whose white face, misery and fright had driven almost every trace of the proud beauty of Bess Saunders.

She was very quiet, and rose and caught his hand in hers as he sprang down at her side.

"You have been my friend so often, that it seems nothing more than what I have always claimed, that you should be so now. You see me here looking like some one hopelessly crazed, and I cannot tell you why. There are some things had best not be spoken—this is one of them. Take me home, in the name of mercy!"

"Bess," cried Berkely, his soul in his words; "give me some right to avenge you of this adversary; tell me only what I must know, and I swear to you he shall not harm you by word or look again."

She shook her head sadly. The rain had ceased, the clouds above her began to break away, and a faint light dawned softly in the west to show the sun was setting.

"There are some women who bring their fate upon them by one act of folly. Once loving him was mine, and he must be spared to curse me, because the woman I love best on earth would feel each blow I struck at him. She's dearer to me than hatred or revenge of any kind." The soft, pale light fell through the dewy air upon her face. "It cannot last forever; one of us must wear out," she said.

It was but a little way back to the cottage where Berkely had inquired, and he led his horse thither, while Bess walked silently at his side. A rough sort of wagon was easily hired, and leaving his steed behind him, Berkely drove the poor girl home without rousing her to speak till they came very near it. Then he said:

"Do you suppose he has returned yet?"

"No," she answered, instantly; "he is standing there at the street corner where we turn. Berkely," she said, and suddenly caught his arm in a nervous grasp; "promise me you will not force him into a quarrel; he will never do more than be insolent to you; that you can surely bear as well as I. As for to-day, why should I make his mother wretched by telling her her son used brutal force to compel me into a promise of marriage with him? He will hide the signs of trouble from her; should I be less kind?"

"I promise you," said Berkely, sullenly.

Larry stood in the hall shaking his dripping coat as they entered.

"Is it war?" he asked, defiantly.

Bess looked at him a moment, and her dead-white face burned up suddenly into a wild, imploring prayer. She stretched out her hands to him in an agony of entreaty.

"Man!" she cried in a hoarse whisper, "if you are human in your nature, leave this house, I pray you on my knees; for the love of mercy or the hope of heaven, leave us; I implore you leave us."

They stood together face to face in the dim, mellow light that came through the stained glass side-lights of the hall, and Berkely

watched them. They were both changed since the morning. She with the dread and anguish that was in her mind, he with some sudden illness, that had rendered him pale, and contorted his features with pain.

"I will go," he said, at length, in a subdued tone; "only wait; I feel strangely now—I must be ill. But I will go away from here."

Mrs. Morrison was at the dining-room door full of commiserating inquiries the next moment, and Berkely, saying that Bess was shivering with wet and cold, hurried her up stairs, leaving Larry to receive all the care and satisfy all the distracted inquiries of his mother.

"You had better not come down again," he said, as they reached the landing near her door.

"It would make her unhappy about me," she said, faintly. "I believe that I have done wrong in wringing that promise from Larry; it was a selfish misery prompted me, and I will try to think what is right."

CHAPTER XLVI.

ITS EFFECTS.

Larry's presence did not trouble Bess again that night, when she came down after an hour's struggle in her own room between her outraged heart and her unselfish love; she found the dining-room deserted by all, except Ellen O'Toole, who stood there as a sentinel, ready to give the word to Jenny Brackett for tea, the instant she appeared in sight.

"Scald the pot, Jenny," said Ellen, "and put in a good lock—your heapin' handfull would be none too much, after such a battle wid the iliments as Miss Bess must have had. Sure Mr. Larry's laid up intirely wid a burnin' faver. Yer aunt's running up and down wid mustard and hot wather, and ye may guess he's

purty bad whin he niver raises his voice agin the balm-tea, wid a good spice of ginger in it."

"Where is Mr. Berkely Morrison?" asked Bess.

"I think he's gone off to tell the man about the horse, or send some one back wid that jaunting car he brought you in, Miss. I heard him say something to Mrs. Morrison about it."

Bess sate down and commenced to drink the tea Ellen poured out for her.

"Mrs. Waters has been here," continued she, drawing down the corners of her mouth, and elevating her sparse eyebrows, to intimate a more than usual importance in the visit of this eldest daughter of the house.

Bess merely nodded slightly, in token of hearing the announcement; but Ellen, tiptoeing across the room, shut the kitchen-door, and returned.

"You know, Miss Bess," she began again, "that there's no love lost between me and yer grand cousin. Whin she was only Miss Katie, sure she had the airs of an Eastern quane, and no more regard for wearing the legs off a poor crayture, running and waiting on her, nor if she hadn't the same flesh and blood herself."

"Ellen, I think you are forgetting yourself when you come to me to speak against my Cousin Katie," said Bess, mildly.

"Not a bit of me forgets meself, nor her nayther," said Ellen, boldly. "Sure she came here to make mischief to-day, an' if she wouldn't hould her tongue afore me, though the mother was givin' her every wink and push wid her foot to kape quiet, I I have no right to consider her sayins sacred. Ses she: 'Where does Bess go every day, do ye think? Down to a low actress' house, no less. Maybe she's learnin' the trade of playacterin' There's them that watched her, and brought me word that she stays hours at a time, and will come out wid her vail down, as if she was afraid to be seen, as well she may.' That's the talk your high lady from West Park brought down here, whin she knew ye were out wid Mr. Larry; and she didn't stop at that, but wint on hinting, till it made the blood boil in my heart till hear. Mr. Berkely knew it, she said, and was kapin' ye at a distance

iver since he found it out. The doctor was mixed up in it, too, but more shame for him, she said. Now if it hadn't been that she wanted to rouse me agin her, and have me turned off for my imperance, I'd niver have let her lave the place widout an honest woman's opinion to take wid her ; but she was just waiting to ake a rise out of me, so I held me tongue, and went lilting about, as if I never heard a word of her gab."

Bess laid down the cup she held in her hand, and rose, looking steadily at the narrator's face ; the news did not act upon her as Ellen had hoped—there was no indignant wrath, or angry denial expressed in her sad features. There was nothing but sorrow, that was painful to look upon, from its utter hopelessness, and her voice expressed the same feeling.

"I am very much obliged to you, Ellen, for being angry because you thought I was wronged. Mrs. Waters is not very strong now, and she becomes nervous and excited ; don't think of what she said again ; she had very little meaning in it, perhaps ; and above all, pray don't speak of it to my aunt ; remember, I need no defender with her."

So she went up stairs again, and heard her aunt bustling around in Larry's room, ringing the bell at intervals for Jenny's attendance, but was not in a mood to ask after her cousin, or give a thought to his welfare.

But Larry was ill, really ill, with an inflammation brought on by recent cold and late excesses, the doctor did not scruple to tell his mother, and for a week or ten days threatened to add another name to the monument out in the cemetery ; but he rallied under the care and constant nursing of his mother and Cousin Berkely, who found Larry, out of his mind, a much more agreeable companion than Larry in his evil senses ; and burying the hatchet, sate night after night at his bedside, relieved by the occasional services of Mr. Little, Joseph Waters, and Dr. Dacey. At length he began to recover, and no sooner was he able to speak, that he begged to be taken down stairs. The horror of lying in a sick chamber was so strong in him, that it became his ceaseless prayer, and as soon as it was at all reasonable, was yielded to.

Bess had not in any way aided in his attendance; she had cooked and brought to his door the gruels and drink prescribed him; but until the day when the combined efforts of Berkely and Joseph Waters carried him down stairs, she had never seen his face since the night of the storm.

It was pleasant, warm weather now, and the honeysuckles on the trellis over the dining-room windows, were so fragrant, that the window blinds were opened, and their sweet breath filled the room. Larry was glad of the change; his pale face lighted up as he looked around him, and he held his mother's hand in his, kindly

"Oh, mother," he said, "this seems like life again; it was horrible being shut up in that room. I thought of uncle lying dead at the foot of his bed, and Nelly wasting away day after day, till I nearly grew wild. What's that?" he cried, in a terrified tone, starting up and clinging round his mother like a frightened child.

"Why, it's only Bess in a white dress," said Mrs. Morrison, soothingly. "It was so warm she took off her black gown while she got tea. Ellen O'Toole has gone up to West Park to ask after Katie, you know."

Seeing that he still trembled violently, she added:

"Why, Larry, where's your nerves gone? I never saw a boy so pulled down in a fortnight's illness before. What in the world ails you? Bess, will you come here?" she said, "and let him see that it's really you, for he makes me miserable to feel him trembling this way."

With a strong effort Larry bit his lips, and controlled their quivering, while Bess came forward in her white wrapper, looking scarcely less faded than her sick cousin.

"I am glad you are better," she said, slowly; "and I am sorry I startled you so."

He took her hand that lay passively in his own an instant, but did not speak; she withdrew it as she had given it, and went on with her household cares.

"Poor Larry," said his mother, fondly. "This has been a sore trial to you, dear, but it has made you seem more like my

own boy that was once the pride and hope of your father's heart and mine, than you have been for many a long year and day."

"If you love me, mother," cried he, faintly, breaking in upon this tender strain, "let me go out in the air; tell the doctor to have a soft, easy carriage brought, or ask him if I may not. You know what I mean—make it a life and death matter, and don't listen to his hemming and hawing about it."

"What an impatient man," said Mrs. Morrison, becoming ruffled at this abrupt petition. "Yesterday it was, would I only have you brought down here—that was all you prayed for or cared for; and now that you're here, it's something else. I don't think the doctor will have patience to listen to you, when you have none yourself."

Larry tossed back his head and groaned.

"It's this death-like house," he said, fretfully. "There's nothing but graves and coffins in the atmosphere. I thought it would be better down here, but it's just as bad. I must go to Paris in a few weeks, and I want strength—I'll never get it here."

"What does the boy mean?" cried Mrs. Morrison, raising her hands and eyes in astonishment. "He wants to go to Paris when he's not fairly out of the jaws of death! Such talk is just tempting Providence, not a whit less."

He turned towards the open window and looked out on the sky, then he turned shudderingly away.

"There's something like faces in the clouds," he said; "I can't see rightly—everything is contorted that I look at. My God, what's that?"

This time he almost sprang in the air, though the noise that startled him so was nothing more than a sharp crack, followed by a shivering sound, and was occasioned by Bess, who was brushing some figures on the mantel-piece that the open window had covered with dust, striking the oval glass that hung above it with the handle, and shattering it into a dozen pieces.

"Oh, I am very sorry," she cried, the instant it was done, both for breaking your old glass, aunt, and startling Larry so; I can easily get one like it, but this one was bought on Katie and Larry's birthday, was it not?"

"Yes, dear, but don't fash yourself about it; we've had worse blows than that, you know. Larry, whatever has come over you that you should get yourself into such a way?"

"Don't you know it means death?" he asked, hoarsely. "Yes you do; I've heard you say so yourself—it means death. But we've had enough of that here, and there's no one to die. I'm getting well, and shall be out to-morrow. The fresh air will act like magic with my nerves—that's all that ails me now."

Having settled it thus conclusively, while Bess gathered up the pieces of glass and replaced them as they were, according to an irrepressible impulse every one has after breaking anything, he watched her with a strange perturbed expression, and broke out again:

"What does it mean after all? You know we are a family for signs and tokens, and you know all about those things, mother."

"Well, then, returned Mrs. Morrison, "I never gave heed to such things myself. I think when the Almighty means to call home a soul to judgment, the breaking of a glass is a poor warning. Larry, dear, I wish you would go to the good Book for your's, and you'll see many a warning there that will be able to take away the terrors of the event when it comes. Turn your heart to God, and there will be nothing fearful in His mysterious ways."

So little consolation did her restless son derive from this view of the question, that he only became more and more disturbed, and wished audibly that the old-fashioned fright of a mirror had been in the bottom of the sea, rather than there, to worry a fellow's senses out of him.

"But I am well," he said, conclusively; "all I want is to get out in the air. Thank God, I've will enough to defy any confounded fool of a doctor who would murder me by tying me up here."

Berkely came in from his office, whose business he was arranging so as to leave on his expected voyage to China; and Ellen O'Toole, in a rainbow shawl and large leghorn bonnet, that was intimidating in its gorgeousness, soon followed him. These

formed Ellen's street adornments, and she had been sent up to inquire after Katie's health, and give a bulletin of Larry's in return.

"How is Katie?" demanded Mrs. Morrison, sharply, for Ellen had made no haste to communicate the result of her inquiries, although her countenance expressed it was not a cheering one.

"Well then, ma'am," she began, slowly, "when I got the length of the Park, I saw the two carriages at the door, so I tuck to my heels, and made speed; for, ye see, I guessed it was the doctor's, and I was anxious to hear what they would say. It was them sure enough, and they're all in a bad way, for the word is that Mrs. Waters is just as bad as bad can be, and the master's distracted wid grief and distress."

Larry rose on his elbow, and his face brightened.

"That may be the meaning of the glass, you know," he said. "Why, of course it is, for she must be very low."

Instantly controlling himself, he sighed and shook his head, saying:

"Poor dear Katie, such a brilliant woman, the gem of the family!"

But, despite his mother's wretchedness at these sad tidings, despite Bess and Berkely's awe-struck faces, and his own attempt at sorrow, Larry's relief at having the omen of the shattered mirror accounted for was very apparent.

"Pour me a cup of tea, Bess," said Mrs. Morrison. "I'll leave Larry here with you all, and go up there at once. I wouldn't be so alarmed about her, but that it began to thunder and lighten that last day she was here before she could have got a block from the door. The horses were startled, and Joseph tells me she has not been herself since."

Berkely caught up his hat and hurried out, so that when his aunt was ready, after swallowing a few mouthfuls of tea, and putting on her street dress, to start for West Park, he was waiting at the door with a hackney coach, and helped her in, and watched her drive away. As he turned to walk up the steps, it was almost dark, and he could see by the light now burning in

the dining-room that Bess was standing before the broken mirror, with her head bent down, apparently weeping. He had half forgotten to close the hall door, and going back to do it, he was startled by the sight of a woman's figure in a long grey mantle, that made it ill defined in the dusk, leaning forward from one of the lower steps, and looking cautiously in. The instant she saw Berkely, which, owing to the intentness of her gaze beyond him, she was slow to do, she sprang down and fled out of sight so quickly, that Berkely half suspected his eyes had deceived him and pictured something that had no existence.

He found Larry, drinking chocolate and eating toast, with a strong effort to get up an appetite, and avowing his solemn determination to be thoroughly well in the morning, and his equally strong resolution to go to Paris in a fortnight at farthest.

"Why do you think of going away, Berkely?" he asked.

His voice was weak and faint, and talking was an evident effort with him; but he was not in a mood to encourage quiet or retrospection, so he drove them away in the labor of speaking.

"I am going on business solely," said Berkely, slowly.

"An old man, of Uncle Terry's tribe of followers, used to say: 'The poor Morrisons are lordly folk, the rich Morrisons are beggarly misers.' Now, I had money, but it's gone; I've got rid of the care of it, and am a true lordly Morrison again; but, you see, Berkely, you are giving truth to an old proverb, and turning miser because you have been successful."

"You think so," was Berkely's answer; and its tone expressed anything you might care to interpret.

"Will you play a game of chess? it's intolerably dull to lie here."

Larry looked up persuasively at his cousin, and Bess went quickly and got the board and box of men, and wheeled forward the table.

"Bess has not spoken since she broke the glass," said Larry. "I hope you don't think you are to blame for poor Katie's trouble, Bess?"

The front door blew closed with a sudden stroke that sounded

all through the house, and Larry started up at the sound, and overthrew board and men.

"What's that! see quick!" he cried. "Run, will you? why do you stand gaping?"

He was fierce in his fear, and turned upon Bess and Berkely like a trembling beast.

Berkely took up the lamp, but seeing that the one in the hall was lighted, laid it down again, and went out in search of the reason for the alarming sound.

Presently he returned. Larry's eyes were wild, and watched him eagerly.

"What was it?" he cried.

"My own carelessness, as far as I can see," answered Berkely, coldly. "I must have left the hall door ajar, and the wind ·sed it noisily."

CHAPTER XLVII.

LARRY SEES A GHOST.

Larry sighed, and leaned back on the sofa, his eyes half closed, and his face very white and wasted looking. Berkely rearranged the chessmen, and Bess sat down by the lamp and began to sew.

None of the three were solely occupied in what they were doing; the quick, wandering glance of each would cross the other every few moments, and then suddenly renew its application to the matter in hand. But Larry and Berkely played chess, the one with his eyes on the broken glass, on Bess, on his opponent, or in all parts of the room; the other with his every thought on the pale sewer before him, whose heart was very heavy this long summer night.

It became late, and still no sign of Mrs. Morrison returning Berkely pushed back his chair and turned to Bess.

"Shall I go up to the Park?" he asked.

"Oh, I wish you would," she replied, so earnestly, that he was up in a moment, and had taken a light to go up stairs for his coat.

"It seems to have turned cold," he said, "and I feel chilled to the heart, sitting here."

"It is chilling," said Larry; "I felt it even when the sun was shining; I had as lief live in a tomb as in this house, now."

When Berkely was gone, there was a faint sound heard in the hall through the partly open door. It was like a soft, low sighing, but very distinct and audible. Bess sprang up, and white with fear, thrust back Larry as he strove to stagger to his feet."

"Do not move," she cried, impetuously; "if you value your life, do not stir," and she ran out of the door, closing it after her violently.

Thrown back in his excessive weakness by the strong force of her arm, Larry sank down, but finding himself alone, fright gave him strength, and he struggled up again, clinging from the chair to the table, and thence to the door, he followed her almost as soon as she had closed it upon him. With an effort he forced the handle round, and it blew back wide, for the outer door was standing open, and a full breeze swept through, swaying the flame in the colored lamp above his head.

Bess was standing half-way between him and the starry night beyond, and her hands were stretched out in entreaty to a female figure that stood within the space, all in white, delicate and unreal as a spirit, with eyes that glowed like an intense flame, and features, that in their shadowy outline, had nothing earthly about them.

A sound that was something between a shriek of despair and a yell of terror, rang through the house from roof to floor, and Berkely, coming bounding down, found his cousin lying at full length on the hall carpet, with his eyes closed, and breathing heavily, but utterly deprived of consciousness or motion. Bess was kneeling at his side, vainly striving to raise him, and the wind was blowing freshly through the open doorway on them both, but there was nothing in sight to account for the cry and

the prostrate figure. Asking no explanation, Berkely, by the aid of Ellen O'Toole, who had come down when the terrible alarm reached her chamber, in a nondescript cloak wrapt over her night gear, removed the prone figure to the couch it had a moment before left.

As they were standing round him, the two women striving by pungent salts and fanning to revive him, and Berkely studying his strangely altered face, with a countenance whose seriousness momentarily deepened into alarm, Mrs. Morrison arrived at her open door in the Waters' coach, and entered it, accompanied by her son-in-law, very much astonished to find it standing thus open at midnight.

Her step was buoyant and her face bright as she entered the dining-room.

"I bring you good news, children," she cried, cheerily. "Katie's trouble's over, and she is the happy mother of as bright a little fellow as I ever saw." The scarlet and radiant countenance of the happy father shone in the background behind her ; but she paused suddenly ; and so did he, while both faces changed their expression at sight of Larry. "What is it ?" they cried together.

"I do not know," answered Berkely, without taking his eyes from the sofa. "It is something that I never saw before ; look at the color of his face and hear his breathing."

"Dr. Windell has but just left West Park ; we left him in in Grove Street. Shall I go for him ?" Mr. Waters asked.

All four of the frightened faces answered yes, and he was gone in another moment.

One thing strange, Berkely, in all the dreary excitement and trouble of that night, could not help noting. It was that Bess was by far the most distracted of them all ; that there was something troubled her besides what they all saw ; but that, distressed and wretched as she was, she heard the carriage wheels turn into Burleigh Place, and met and whispered with the doctor in the hall before any of the rest had seen his face. As he came in, Berkely felt she had told him something that contracted his brows, and drew his lips in, and set an impenetra-

ble watch upon his features that defied an attempt to read them.

It was a serious case. He knew that at once, for when the doctor strove to rouse Larry by shaking him, and his mother interfered, saying :

"He's too weak, poor boy ; if its sleep, just let him rest."—He answered :

"It is a sleep he would never wake from if left to himself Some of you run for this leecher," giving the card to Berkely ; "and you," pointing to Ellen O'Toole, "get me water for the feet and the coarsest towels you have. I shall want your strength in rubbing his limbs for hours."

"He has the best brandies that are to be had in the country, doctor, wouldn't that strengthen him ?" begged his terrified mother.

"No," said the doctor, bluntly ; "there has been too much already. That and the opium he has taken to produce sleep at night, these last few months, are the worst enemies we have to fight with now."

When the mocking day dawned through the windows of the dining-room, now through necessity made a sick chamber, it showed a dreary sight ; the tables ladened with bottles, mustard-pots, bandages stained with blood, and glasses half filled with different mixtures.

On the sofa, Larry, with his temples bound up, lay snoring as heavily as ever, only that now he started in his sleep once in a while, and slightly rolled his head. Beside him sate the tired doctor, looking worn out and jaded with his work, but still attentively watching the job in hand with his keen eyes.

Berkely had persuaded Mr. Waters to return home to West Park, and was but just come back himself, with one of the many experimental prescriptions suggested to Dr. Windell, as the case progressed. Ellen O'Toole began to stir in the kitchen, and make the fire.

"If we only had him up stairs," said Mrs. Morrison, sadly looking about her at the signs of the night's struggle.

"That's easily done," said the doctor. "He will walk up with our aid ; but give him a room on the first floor."

They succeeded in rousing him and getting him to move slowly, with Berkely on the one side and the doctor on the other, but no sooner had he touched the bed in the handsome front chamber, where Nelly had been the last to lie, than he dropped off into a heavy doze again.

The doctor rose, and taking Berkely aside, said :

"I am going home to get some rest, or I shall fall over on the other side of your friend there, and emulate him in hard breathing. There's an experienced man-nurse wanting, and I'll send one I happen to have the command of just now. I'll leave my directions with him, and be back again in a few hours."

"What is it?" asked Berkely, looking towards the bed, and speaking under his breath, for fear the reply would reach his aunt's ears.

"It's a sort of paralysis ; I can tell you more of it when I see its changes—at present he only needs the care I spoke of, and the rubbing that had better be kept up till the man arrives."

Mrs. Morrison had been persuading Bess to lie down, and Bess was protesting against taking rest while her aunt watched.

"Both of you go to bed for a few hours," said the doctor, interfering, "I'm telling Mr. Morrison that I'll send a man I can rely on to take his place here. You are both only in the way now, and he will stay till the nurse arrives."

Being in great need of repose, Mrs. Morrison at length consented to go into her own room, and lie down on the sofa, on condition of being called at an instant change.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

IMPLICIT TRUST.

Bess followed her, and was soon in her own chamber, Berkely hoped, taking the rest her utter prostration seemed to demand, but he found to his astonishment he was mistaken. The bed-

room was becoming light with the morning sun, and fearing to disturb the sleeper with the gleam, Berkely raised the window to draw the blinds. The hall-door closed as he did so, and a tall figure, dressed in mourning, flitted away down the Place out in the main street in great haste.

"What in heaven's name can she mean by this miserable secrecy?" he thought, bitterly. "What can there be in her innocent life that requires this hidden outlet?"

He was instantly ashamed of the feeling that had thus impetuously arraigned her as a plotter. "It is right, all perfectly right, or she would not do it," he said to himself, determinedly. "God forbid that I should do myself the injustice to doubt her."

He knew that there was no confidence between them now; that she shrunk from meeting him alone even for an instant. He had seen her go back into the parlors rather than pass him face to face on the staircase, when no one else was by, and he could not deny the palpable subterfuges that had engaged her attention, when for a moment they two had been left together in the common sitting.room. She never looked at him now with that bright, grateful look in her large dark eyes, that used to be the secret of his happiness; and being very wretched with the struggle that doubt, disappointment, and hopelessness kept up in his heart, he foolishly resolved to go away before he should be conquered entirely in the fight, and lose his self-control and manhood.

"But this is not a time to think of that," he thought. "My aunt will need all the little aid I can bestow, and absence now would be desertion."

So when the man that Dr. Windell had sent, was brought up to Larry's bedside, and taking in the case at a glance, fell to rubbing the poor fellow's cold limbs in Berkely's stead, he being relieved of that care, ran up to his own room to freshen up his jaded appearance for the street. He was going to attend to a few necessary items connected with his changed plans, for he had determined not to sail to China in the coming fortnight, which had been his former idea.

He took a cup of coffee, and answered a tithe of Ellen's in-

quiries concerning the patient above stairs, and then, it being now fully nine o'clock in the morning, he made a few memoranda relative to his changed views, and hurried out to meet some business appointments, telling Ellen to say to his aunt, when she awoke, that he would only be absent an hour or two at farthest. He might have given the message himself, for he met her cautiously descending the stairs, and leaning heavily on the bannisters as she came.

"There's no change at all," she whispered; "but I can't keep my head down on a pillow; I'm just gone *through other*, with one blow after another. Lord only knows where it will all end!"

As she spoke, the door opened carefully, and Bess, apparently unaware of their presence, came stealing in from the street. Seeing them, she colored and breathed quickly.

"How is he now?" she said, trying to be composed.

Her aunt's face flushed angrily, and for the first time in his knowledge, Berkely saw her look at her niece in strong displeasure.

"You seem to come and go without much regard to who's ailing, Bess," she said, suspiciously. "It must have been a strange business that couldn't be neglected in a time of life and death like this."

Bess made no reply; but, with a swift, deprecating glance, looked down, and stood like a criminal, trembling between them.

"It's beyond me to know what hidden business you have in hand, Bess Saunders," Mrs. Morrison went on; "but let it be what it like, it's not worthy of you, as they who look at you now can easily see. And such company as you choose—a low actress! Oh, Bess, Bess, I blush for you!"

A heat that almost seemed to consume him, burnt in Berkely' heart; it was the fire of indignation, and for an instant or two the fierceness of the feeling swallowed his words; at length he commanded himself, to say:

"For shame, aunt; the whole devoted life of this woman has been at your service. You have never found in her a selfish

thought, or an act that did not make you look above yourself; yet you cannot trust her an hour on the surety of the past. For shame, for shame!"

He opened the parlor door, and almost thrust the poor cowering girl in there, out of sight of the critical eyes that looked at her.

"Not a mother's eyes," he thought to himself, as he caught the glance. "No, no; it was a mother's love she gave her when she could find neither fault nor blot about her; but this is the aunt that judges her now."

Mrs. Morrison did not follow her; either abashed at her nephew's reproof, or too aggrieved to reply to it, she passed on out of sight, and they two stood alone together. Bess closed the door, and came close to her cousin.

"I'm sick and faint, so don't mind my looks, Berkely," she said; "but try to understand me. I must have Charlotte Waters come to me at once, and then you must help me for a little while—only a little while—without making me unhappy, so very unhappy, Berkely."

It surely could not have been Bess's voice that said this so tenderly, so imploringly. Berkely doubted his sense of hearing, but he could not doubt the reality of the throbbing joy the sound awoke within his heart. He caught her hands in his own, and looked at her steadily. Certainly he had never seen her look so ill before—the shadows of a sleepless night about her eyes, the weariness of distress of mind in every feature; but there was something else in the face before him that was dearer to him than all its proud beauty. It gave him courage to speak, though his voice trembled with the timidity that belongs to the deepest feelings of large hearts.

"Oh, Bess, is it possible for me to make you happy—have I the power? Am I mad, to ask you this?"

She looked up at him a moment, and then, trembling violently, said:

"No, Berkely, for I love you, and I know you love me." As she uttered the words, she shook from head to foot, and burst into tears.

"Here, Bess, here," he cried, in wild exultation. "Here, darling, on my breast. Please God, these are the last tears you shall ever shed, my Bess, my life, my soul!"

In everything but joy a temperate man, Berkely Morrison, as he held the tall, slight figure in his arms, and pressed it to his heart, became beside himself. The heavy sleeper above stairs, the mysterious trouble that had wakened his aunt's suspicious displeasure, the projected voyage, all dissolved into a mist, and floated away in the memory of his own past wretchedness. He would have stood thus forever, lost in that blessed sense of hope fulfilled, without the sting that sometimes lies hidden in fruition Bess raised her face.

"You must go, Berkely," she said; "this happiness makes it all clearer to me. Bring Charlotte; for it is serious business, as you will soon know."

He obeyed her instantly, and as he stooped to kiss her, she said softly, with a proud light just dawning on her pale face:

"You do not question me, but trust in me entirely?"

He only answered with a look; but that was enough for her. As the echo of his quick, buoyant step came from the street without, she fell upon her knees, being humbled by the flash of joy that shone like a great light in the gloom that hung around her.

CHAPTER XLIX.

MISGIVINGS.

THERE was in interval or two of waking during the day, and Larry's heavy slumber seemed slightly broken to begin again, and so he passed another night. But the next day he spoke; with difficulty at first, but gradually plainer, and in a very weak and gentle voice, and thanked his mother for a drink she gave him.

"Oh, you are so good. It is so nice and cool," he said, and smiled like a pleased child, and closed his eyes again.

These were the first distinct words he uttered; and it had been so much the habit of his life to receive without gratitude, that their form and tone were both startling to her ear. In an hour or two he was talking freely, still in the same weak voice, but without apparent effort. It was not the old Larry that spoke; whatever the mysterious nature of the blow that fell so suddenly upon him, there was this about it, that it had struck out as a paid balance all the old imperious, thankless element in his nature that demanded everything and accounted no pang in another a sacrifice, while his own slight twinges were agonies. This broken figure, with its nerveless, expressionless face, lying in stolid repose, had nothing to offer but gentle pleadings and tender thanks, and turned its dull, full eye from side to side watching the kindly offices of those who waited on him, with a strange absence of their old proud, selfish gleam.

Something inexplicable went on meantime in the house below. Mrs. Morrison saw that, deeply as her heart was sunk with the prostrate figure of her son, Charlotte Waters had been there, and went away bowed and weeping, and Berkely had been coming and going with Joseph Waters, and all of them had waylaid Dr. Windell, as he came from Larry's room; and there had been whisperings and secrecy on all sides. It was at breakfast on the fourth day after Larry's strange attack, and the first time that his mother had come down to a regular meal, when she turned to Berkely, as they sate alone, and said:

"You took me to task, Berkely, for my words the other day, and you did well, for when I forget what Bess used to be to me, I deserve a sharp reminder; but Berkely, dear, that time has gone by, Bess is no longer the girl she once was. I'm losing all I ever held dear, and Bess is going too."

She shook her head, and the large tears trickled slowly down her faded face.

Berkely began to speak, but caught sight of Bess, who stood silent and sorrowful behind her aunt's chair, with her finger upon her lips, so he looked down and made no reply.

"Whatever it is the poor girl has in view, it is a folly to think that I would go against her, as she seems to do. If it

was to lose me all I have in this world, I would not gainsay her wish. Maybe it is her pleasure to have the place to herself; new ties make new plans, as Katie says, and if it's so, she has only to speak the word, and I'll not stand in her way."

Berkely moved uneasily in his chair; at length, despite Bess's warning, broke out:

"Oh, aunt, do not I entreat you let her hear you talk in this way; it would distress her more than you can dream of."

His aunt looked at him in surprise.

"You know that it's the doctor," she said, abruptly. "I doubted it myself till I could doubt no longer; he's a noble gentleman, no doubt, but I don't understand such hidden work. I wish them joy, but I don't understand it."

"Do you think Larry is really better?" Berkely interrupted; he gives us every hope in his appearance, but do you think there is any danger of a relapse?"

"I'm not used to such sickness," she replied; "it is all new to me—but I'm thankful to heaven that he is as he is now."

And Larry continued to grow better, but to be himself no longer in anything. His very face had changed—the chiselled beauty of its features was lost in the mild and childish look they wore. The arching pride of lip and nostril, the proud curve in his brows, the half haughty, half gay flash in his eye, were things that had been, but were gone forever. It was a little while before they discovered that he had lost more than the mere outward pride of his beauty, and that mind and memory had suffered too. To his mother he spoke kindly and tenderly, but always with a certain wistful questioning glance, as if there were something he would ask if he could find the words to frame the sentence.

"Oh, Larry, darling, it makes my heart ache with joy and sorrow to see you so," his mother said, as she watched him picking out the many colored silk threads that formed the tassel of a fan he held, and laughing eagerly when he came to a scarlet one. "Your mother's boy, your mother's poor, weak boy!"

"Mother," he whispered, softly; "mother—mother. Yes," he added, quickly, "that's it, that's it—mother, mother—mo-

ther," and he laughed merrily, as if he had made a great discovery.

After that, every time she came near him, he would repeat, "Mother, mother, mother," and look at her and smile a sweet, happy smile, that would have been innocent on the face of an infant. Bess he greeted in the same pleased way, but she saw with a feeling that had an odd throb of bitterness in it, that he had to learn her name, and that her face awoke no memory in his dormant mind. But his strength grew greater, and his color bloomed again, a healthy glow on his pale face, and he sate by the open window in the sweet summer weather, very happy in its light and warmth, and free from care as he had ever been in childhood.

He could move about slowly, though he soon grew weary, and sought the cushioned-chair again. Every little picture, with a speck of brightness in it, attracted him; the flowers that were set in vases, to make his chamber bright, were an unfailing delight to his eyes; he would touch their leaves tenderly with his fingers, and try to connect their delicate folds of deepening bloom, singing softly to himself snatches of children's May songs that he must have heard twenty years before, for of all old things like these, he seemed constantly reminded, while the present was as something dead.

But as he thus slowly rose to a new, strange life and being, there was a deep shadow in the house, and on his mother's heart.

Katie had grown strong and well again, and to her the poor, lonely, sorrowing woman went with her grief.

Not all the glory of the gorgeous chamber that Katie kept convalescent state in, could lighten the heavy heart of her mother.

"The Lord in His wisdom has spared poor Larry," she said, "and though he has had a blow that has shook both mind and body, he's slowly coming to himself, I see, and so I hope for the best, blessed be His merciful name. But oh, Katie dear, Bess is not the Bess that used to be the light and comfort of my life. She slips out of my sight if I turn my eyes towards her, and

when I think she's safe in her bed at midnight, I see her gliding out of the hall-door like an evil spirit that shrinks from the light, or coming in like a ghost, white with watching."

Katie gave a short laugh, and answered encouragingly.

"And you know poor Nell and I might have done wrong, and in fact were accused of it every day of our lives, but Bess was immaculate, you always said. You find out now you were deceived."

"No, no," said her mother, impetuously. "I never will believe she was not what I thought her; there's something now that I do not understand, and that gives me pain and sorrow to think of; but oh, Katie, think what the dear lass was to us all in many a happy year."

Katie evidently did not enjoy such a retrospect; so she turned the conversation back to Larry. "We are still going to Paris when baby's old enough, and he can go with us, can he not? There's nothing so good as traveling for shaken nerves. If you had rather not go, which I suppose would be the case," she added, remembering a little homespun something in her mother's manner that struck her as at variance with fashionable life, "then you can come up here, and be mistress while I'm away, and write me about everything; and get long letters filled with hopeful news of Larry in return. There, you will enjoy that, I know."

Her mother shook her head, and looked down on the carpet, but did not speak.

"And you know," Katie went on, "that there is my old plan of the Oak Hill house, and I think it a capital one still. If you say the word, Joseph will order the improvements commenced to-morrow, for I suppose it will be some time before Larry is able to take charge of anything."

Her mother, so far from finding comfort in any suggestion of her active-minded daughter, simply put her face between her two hands at this point, and let the great warm tears gush through her fingers, till her poor, gray head was bowed with emotion.

"Whatever takes me from her, or the home of my happy memory, is a bitter kind of comfort to me, Katie; I'll not dis-

guise that from you," she said. "First came that wedding of Larry's, that was like a blighting wind, and withered all that followed; since then, the sky has grown darker and darker, till there is not a ray of hope before me, but that his body was spared, with a weak, failing mind to guide it."

Katie looked round with a strong expression of being bored on her delicate features. She changed her position restlessly, and arranged her beautiful drapery into more graceful folds.

"Uncle Terry was an old man," she said, "and really lived longer than one could have expected. Poor Nell's was a loss; but then consumption, you know," and she elevated her eyebrows, and shook her head, "there's no flying death, when it comes in that form. As for the rest, poor Larry married a monomaniac; but even that connection was not without its good points." And she took a comprehensive view of the elegance around her, and sighed complacently.

This, then, was what Mrs. Morrison heard at her daughter's mansion; and, added to this, she saw a cradle disguised in a cloud of lace, wherein lay an ill-developed little creature, with nothing pretty about it, but its helplessness, guarded on either side by a showily dressed nurse, whose splendor threw the poor old grandmother quite in the shade.

As she departed, Mrs. Morrison offered her daughter some wholesome advice on the small object of so much display.

"See that its feet are kept warm, and its stomach well filled, and you can just send your glowering pair of hussies adrift," she said. "Sure, I would not have them set up fornent me, if I was paid for keeping them, let alone the expense they must be to you."

"Do you mean the nurses, mother? Pray speak low, and remember there are certain things necessary in certain places. The upper one is a French lady of excellent manners, who will be an admirable woman to travel; that is her assistant in the blue dress—she chose her herself."

"It's just rank nonsense; but if you're easy about it, I have nothing to say; only, if the baby takes the colic, your two popinjays will be no more good to you than a couple of painted par-

rots. But, Katie dear, just take a spoonful of clear Irish whisky, in a gill of sweetened warm water—or, if it has a sore fit of it, as you often and often had yourself at the same age, just take a spoonful of warm sweet milk, and then get a draw of a strong pipe in your mouth, and blow it into it. It's a sovereign balm, and was the saving of you when your face was just knotted with pain."

CHAPTER L.

LARRY PRAYS.

As there was nothing very promising to go home to, poor Mrs. Morrison sighed sadly as the elegant equipage of her son-in-law turned with her into Burleigh Place. Bess met her at the door, and took her shawl from her arm, and inquired earnestly after Katie and her boy, for in all outward duties the poor girl was unchanged, and she even strove, by redoubled attentions, to bridge the painful gulf of want of confidence between them; but her solicitude glanced off steel in Mrs. Morrison. She gave her a keen look at first, and finding that her glance met the same downcast eye and compressed lip that it had been her misery to greet so long, she just turned away and went up stairs to Larry, answering shortly, that—

"Both were well enough; there was nothing wrong with them, thank God!"

He was sitting in his easy-chair, smiling and perfectly idle, which seemed to his poor mother's heart the worst feature in his case. He would sit for hours, thoroughly contented to look before him into space, with a happy passiveness about him that seemed to have abjured thinking and contriving forever. Neither did the coming or going of any one affect him, and he only noticed his mother now when she stood close before him—then he laughed.

"Mother," he said, "mother, mother."

He seemed fond of repeating her name, and this time he added suddenly :

" You are dressed all in black. What is that for ?"

The poor old woman, with distress and anxiety in her eyes, came and sate down close beside him.

" Do you not mind Uncle Terry, darling ?" she asked ; " old Uncle Terry ?"

" Uncle Terry has canes," said Larry, slowly ; " Uncle Terry has canes and pipes."

" Oh dear, oh dear ! but that brings back old times to me. Yes, Larry dear, I can see you riding his old thorn stick round the parlors, or pretending to smoke a long twirled-stemmed pipe he bought in Turkey, when he went to sea as a surgeon, nearly fifty years ago. Dear, oh dear ! was it that you were thinking of, Larry ?"

Larry, whatever efforts he had made at thought, had now abandoned them all, and sate smiling as inanimately as ever.

" And poor sister Nelly dear," continued his mother, with streaming eyes ; " you know poor Nelly darling, don't you ?"

" Nelly !" said Larry, quite roused at the name ; " Nelly, where's Nelly ? Call her, mother. Tell her to bring the bagatelle board with her."

In a dark closet, in Mrs. Morrison's chamber, where everything that her lost daughter had ever kept or prized as her own was laid away as sacred mementoes of the dead, this very same faded bagatelle board lay among the rest.

" Nelly cannot come to you, dear," his mother said, softly ; " she and uncle are safe at home together in a happier world, and I humbly thank His blessed name that they are."

The stricken woman uttered this from the very depths of her bowed heart, but her words were meaningless to her happy son.

" Bess," he said, gaily, " there's Bess coming up the stairs ; I know her footstep ; open the door, mother, and see."

Bess opened it herself, and came in, and he laughed gaily to find he was right.

" I knew it was you, because I like you, Bess ; sit here."

She took the place he pointed to beside him, and sate silently

returning his smile, and letting him draw out her curls, one by one, to their full length, and laugh at them recoiling themselves again.

"The doctor says he had better be taken down to tea, and so Berkely said he would come home early and assist him down stairs, if you approved, aunt," she said.

"I suppose it's all right, then," her aunt answered; "but one place or another seems the same to him now, poor boy."

"His memory will come back slowly," said Bess, in a low voice. "It is better that it should be so."

"It is better that it should never come at all, than that it should bring back his old nature and habits with it. If he is a child in sense now, he seems a child in guile and evil; if all must come together, God keep him as he is, I humbly pray!"

Her solemn manner caught her son's attention; he looked at her wonderingly.

"What is it?" he asked, mysteriously. "Is it something that Bess is hiding, mother?"

"No," his mother answered, looking meantime keenly at her niece's flushed face. "She's not hiding *this*. What I was speaking of, is in a higher hand than hers."

"Don't scold Bess," he said, gently smoothing her hair, as if he detected something injurious in his mother's tone. "Dear Bess, good Bess, true Bess."

The poor girl leant forward, in a vain effort to hide her face, and burst into a flood of tears.

Her aunt, touched to the heart, drew near her, and slipped her hand into hers.

"Bess, my own dear Bess," she said, her voice weak with the burden of its own feelings, "why do you distrust the one you know has loved you best and longest? Oh, darling, if it is the house, or money, or a change in your plans or feelings, why not speak the word? Do you think I would stand in your way, if you have chosen a stranger, who does not wish to be mixed up with us? No, dear, only tell me what you mean, and without the loss of a pin's point of love or gratitude, I'll go where you will, and do what you will."

Bess sprang forward and threw herself on the bosom of her aunt, sobbing convulsively, and trying to restrain her words.

"No, no, no," she cried, "do not name such things; oh, do not think me capable of such foul meanness. Trust me, aunt, for a little while, oh, do trust me, and I will tell you all; my mother, my dear second mother!"

Larry was kneeling too beside her, with his poor, meaningless face turned pitifully upwards, when Jenny Brackett tapped at the door.

"Miss Bess," she said, with her own wide-eyed breathlessness of manner, "there's a message for you. You're to go straight where you are expected, and lose no time; there has been a sudding change. Them was the words, and you was to be quick as lightning, Barnes said."

In an instant she sprang up, and Larry began to rise too.

Suddenly she laid her hand upon him and held him down Her face had grown pale, and her eyes were full of a strange light.

"Pray," she said, solemnly, "pray, if you can find words to ask forgiveness, He may hear you. Oh, pray with him, aunt; if you prize heaven's mercy for him, pray!"

With a manner wild as her words, she sped away after Jenny, who had departed with the last sound of her message, and the mother and son were left alone together. She, lost in sorrowful amazement, and he, urged by the fervency of his cousin's words into a faint recollection of childish devotion, softly repeating:

"Our Father who art in heaven, forgive us our trespasses, and keep us from evil!"

CHAPTER LI.

"THAT WAS LOST BUT NOW IS FOUND."

BERKELY was at home and sitting quietly reading in the parlors, when Mrs. Morrison came down after awhile. At least he seemed to read, but though Mrs. Morrison did not know it, he had been holding the same page before him ever since Bess had left him there an hour before. He looked up now, and asked if he should come and help Larry down to tea.

"I hardly know; I am dazed like, with one thing and another. Berkely, can you, or rather will you tell me what is wrong?" she asked, pitifully.

"I can only guess—I have no right to say," he replied, hesitatingly. "I have asked nothing, and received no answer—but I think—that is, I fear Bess will tell you all to-night."

"You fear," his aunt repeated, slowly, looking at him searchingly, as she spoke. "You wouldn't advise her to, it seems," and she turned coldly away and went up stairs, saying, "You had better take your tea—I'll see to Larry myself, and not trouble you."

Ellen O'Toole was the next to break into Berkely's study of that one important page that he had not yet turned.

"Sure ye might jist come in and take the desarted look off the table," she said, persuasively. "Your aunt will nayther take bit nor sup, and Jenny and me has lost our stomachs with the rest. Oh, do come away in and ate a bit."

"Certainly," said Berkely, briskly, and he followed her, to her great relief, with an appearance of keen appetite, but it ended there; and after breaking open a biscuit and stirring a cup of tea, determinedly, he sate back in his chair and fell to perusing the ceiling as he had done the book, while poor Ellen's kindly satisfaction effervesced.

"You're as bad as the rest, and jist timpt me, to look at ye

wasting victuals. I hope ye mayn't all be brought to want for it yet"

Without much ceremony, she began to gather the things away from before him, and Berkely, awaking to the extent of his offense, swallowed the tea at a draught, and made a hasty demonstration on the biscuit that tended so little to mollify her, that she actually took it out of his hand.

"Don't be choking yerself to plase me, Mr. Berkely; yer full enough of yer own feelins, no doubt, and sorra' a bit of wonder at it."

It was nearly midnight when the heavy rumbling of carriage wheels through the silent streets, made Berkely start to his feet. The sound came nearer and stopped at the door.

He was still in the parlors, lighted only by the reflection from the hall lamp, and going out into the passage, was surprised to hear his aunt's door open too, and her feet beginning to descend the stairs—for it was late, and he had not heard her moving about for hours.

There were steps outside, and then the door-bell rang a quick, sharp peal, just as Mrs. Morrison reached the hall floor.

Berkely stood a moment looking toward her.

"Open it," she said; "it is likely to be Bess. These are favorite hours with her now."

It was Bess, but not alone; Joseph and Charlotte Waters were with her. They came first, and she stood slightly in the background, muffled in a long, grey cloak that gave her an odd appearance.

"Is anything wrong with Katie?" cried her mother, the instant she caught sight of the brother and sister; but as they hastened to reply in the negative, she conquered her momentary alarm, and said coldly and ceremoniously:

"You are late visitors, and you'll excuse the dark parlors, if you please. Walk in. Berkely, you'll oblige me if you light the lamps."

Berkely touched one of the burners of the chandelier, and they all sate down in silence.

Bess came near her aunt, and suddenly kneeling before where she was seated, threw aside her cloak, and showed her a sleeping infant that she held cradled in her arms, close to her bosom. It was a tiny creature, scarcely two months old, but very, very pretty—and very, very like its mother. It was to this likeness that Bess trusted, as a preparation for what her aunt had to hear.

It was not enough. Mrs. Morrison looked from one to the other, with a face that belonged to some terrible nightmare, and even the power of speech seemed denied her, though her lips moved once or twice, as if trying to utter some faint expression of her painful bewilderment. Berkely leaned against the chimney-piece, his eyes rivetted on the woman and the child. Joseph Waters sate with a bowed head and solemn mien, and his sister held his hand in her's and shared his attitude and expression.

"Aunt"—it was Bess who spoke—"do you remember the night after our darling Nelly left us? Think a little while. Ah, I see you do! I was ill that night, you know. It was from a fright, so terrible that nothing but Heaven's tender mercy gave me power to live through it. That night I saw this baby's mother, whom I had thought dead, rise, as it seemed, from her grave in the pitiless sea, and come back to demand her innocent youth from the household where the first blight fell on its happy sunshine. In my terror, she bound me with an oath, dictated by her own lips, that I would not, as I hoped for heaven, mention her as one of the living, or give a trace or clue whereby she could be found. You understand me now, aunt; that was four long months ago, and I have braved the loss of all I prized on earth to keep that vow."

The old woman—suddenly become to look very old indeed, and strangely haggard, as she listened—stooped forward and clutched the girl, and drew her towards her closely, so that the baby lay in both their arms.

Bess began to weep.

"The poor creature, who had lost her place among the living, was not clear or calm in any way, and thought herself pursued by terrible phantoms; the doctor said it would be better by-and-

bye, and we trusted to this little dove to bring a promise of peace to its poor mother's darkened mind. Aunt, it was a mightier angel than this tiny one. It came to-night, with its broad pinions, and folded them round her, a quiet, calm, loving, forgiving woman; and oh, better still, aunt, a happy Christian, going joyfully home to a double father's love."

Sobbing convulsively, Bess fell forward, and Berkely gently drew the infant from her arms, and there was nothing between the two women as they knelt together in each other's embrace.

"Mr. Morrison," Joseph Waters began, speaking in a low voice, "it is due to you to know that our poor dear child did not dread you, nor your good aunt; but, until to-night she was unreasonable on the subject of seeing any near connections of her husband's except Bess, and when she wished for you all to come, it was unfortunately too late to gratify her."

"Yet she came here twice," said Berkely, recalling the terror of Bess and the night Larry received the shock that had left him the wreck he was.

Joseph threw a quick glance at Bess and her aunt as they whispered to each other their sorrow and love.

"Had she better be told everything?" he whispered.

Berkely followed the kind eyes of her son-in-law, as they rested pityingly on the weeping woman. Her tears were the clearing shower that sometimes comes in the evening after a gloomy day, and gives the close a beautiful sunset. It was all bright and cloudless between Bess and her, and he could not think it best to tell her one painful word that she might be spared.

Charlotte's heart had decided as his had done, for at this instant she took the infant from Berkely, and giving them both a look and motion of her hand, they three stole out together.

"Leave it to Bess to tell what is best for her to know," said she, when they were seated in the dining-room. "And now, Mr. Morrison, you must not think me a stricken woman, for I thankfully declare to you to-night that in my inmost soul a sense of solemn joy reigns over every other feeling. The delicate little figure that we composed in her last sleep an hour ago, was our child that was lost and now is found, was dead and now she is

alive in hope and peace. She never was deranged except from misery and terror. That demon above stairs threatened her life in a dozen covert ways that she discovered one by one. He had almost poisoned her in the South, and in Paris he set her horse off when they were riding, and she clung to its mane for a hole square. This is what sent her home possessed by such a horror. Then she grew ill, and had no power to hide her tremors, so they thought her mad, and watched her. The infinite mercy of Heaven alone can know and pity the wretched struggle that went before her wild resolve to die. It was a dark night, she tells us, and she found her way clear, and fled for the water. Without waiting one moment after she reached it, she threw her cloak and hood upon the ground, and stepped back from the pier to spring in, when she heard a strange cry and a plunge, and a sudden terror seizing her, she caught up the mantle she had dropped, and ran and ran and ran, till she dropped down somewhere near a market, and lay cowering and trembling till the break of day. It was a poor neighborhood, and when, as the coming light showed her, she found she had picked up a wretched shawl and faded head-dress instead of her own, she never paused to unravel the mistake ; but, selling in some shop at hand a ring and chain or two she wore, she bought a few things needful, and lingered about in this low quarter all the day till evening ; then she took the cars, and came here, with no object that I can discover, except to get away from him."

"Did she come to this house at once ?" asked Berkely.

"No," Charlotte said, and paused a little while. "I am sorry it was so, but the woman has done nobly," she went on at length. "There was an actress—a certain Addie West—who found her in the street, by some chance, and knew her, altered as she was, and took her home. She attached some importance to Bess's influence over her, and persuaded Juliet at last to see her, which she did that evening after Nelly died. From that time, Bess has been devoted to the poor darling, and it was on her bosom she died to-night." Charlotte Waters broke down here, and bowing her head, sobbed over the sleeping infant with all her heart.

"She left her baby to Bess's care; it was the strongest proof she could give of her undying love and gratitude, she said, and Bess must know that. She knew everything that happened, except that the sight of her had turned that fellow's murderous brain. She had not seen Bess for a week then, and being uneasy, had come to watch about for a glimpse of her. She did not wait to see him fall, it seems, though she knew he was there, and fled away in terror of being recognized. Nothing could persuade her to look on his face, until it was too late to bring him there; but she died, blessing and forgiving him, which proves that she had lost all trace of earthly feeling."

"Dr. Windell knew it all from the first, then?" Berkely said, remembering how he and Bess had gone away together at night, and how much misery the sight had given him.

Joseph Waters began to say, looking deprecatingly at his sister, meantime:

"Yes, that was necessary, for though Charley don't think so, it appeared to the rest that the dear little thing was not herself—that she wandered in her mind, and might at any time be tempted to do something rash. Now, I don't want to annoy you, Charley, dear," he continued, gently, as his sister turned indignantly away, "but until the baby was born, it seems she quite raved at times. Then she became quieter, and at last consented to see us. You remember when you came up that night, Mr. Morrison?"

Berkely bowed, and looked steadily at the carpet as the whole story seemed to blend itself into the scroll-work there. First the pretty, trusting bride, and now the cold, insensible figure, lying at peace in West Grove street. The actress, who being wronged herself, had strangely come to be the friend and refuge of her enemy's wife; and oddly enough, with all the rest, the phantom of an unknown woman, whose perishing body had floated away, surrounded by so many memories of sorrow and remorse, who was she? Some nameless, houseless being, whom none of them had ever seen, and who had died in want, despair or madness, little thinking that for months, her rash and miserable death would be a mask for a life almost as hopeless.

CHAPTER LII.

THE DAY BREAKS.

Bess came in with her aunt after a long time, and found them sitting together, talking still in broken whispers of the story so strange, that it could not grow old to any.

Mrs. Morrison was very subdued and tearful, and held Bess's hand in hers, as if loath to lose the touch of one so long estranged.

"You must go now, Charlotte," Bess said, "it is nearly day-break, and my aunt must rest; we have thought and spoken about it all, and she is calm and resigned, as you see. Joseph will see us to-morrow, and the next day we will be there."

She kissed her as she took the baby from her arms, but did not go with her into the hall. Her aunt did, and Berkely and she stood alone together.

"I have not asked you about this, Berkely," she said, without raising her eyes from the tiny face they lingered on so fondly.

"It all belongs to that part of my life that had past before I knew you, and I cannot give it up."

Before he spoke, Berkely was conscious of a mean little sting, that reminded him to be glad that there was nothing of her father in the baby's face; he crushed the thought impatiently, and rejoiced in the sweet quiet that shone in the dear, sad eyes that now met his, enquiringly.

"I had no confession to make," she said, smiling. "You knew the past, and chose me; but you can refuse me now, you know, since there are two of us to be taken."

Berkely looked at her again; she seemed so beautiful in his eyes that he was loath to lose the sight.

"There is room in my heart, Bess, even for Larry's child, when you hold it in your arms; but—it would come out, you see—thank God it don't look like him; it is such a tiny picture of its poor young mother, that it melts my very soul to look at it."

He took them both to his broad bosom, and held them there, while in his inmost heart he vowed, God being his help, that the daughter's life should be a compensation for the blighted existence of the mother ; and before his Maker's eye, that moment, he solemnly adopted Larry's child as his own.

Mrs. Morrison's eye fell upon them, standing thus, in perfect astonishment, that instantly changed to pleasure ; a pleasure that brought a sigh with it, for, as she beheld them, a shadowy pair of figures that had been the day-dream of years gone by, seemed to float away and burst like bubbles in the sunshine. They were the counterparts of Bess and Larry in their early youth, and had become so fixed in the framework of her hope and fancy, that blurred and defaced as they had been, they still revived again ; but this sight dashed them out forever. It was Bess and Berkely now, and Larry was lying like a broken instrument of sound that had been shattered once, and put together with unskillful fingers, though seeming like its former self, could no more answer to the touch of song.

A faint, shadowy streak of daylight pierced the bowed shutters and played about the head of Nelly's picture, that had been put there to replace Larry's, since her mother missed her bright face from the room.

As her aunt kissed Bess in silent congratulation, she saw it, and smiled in answer to the look it seemed to bend upon her.

"I never saw a plighted love at day-break before, darling," she said ; "it may be a good omen to you both ; and look at Nelly's picture—her angel face seems smiling on you now."

Bess held up the child as if to catch the light, but did not speak. She could not ; her whole life seemed crowned with perfect peace and rest from that hour, and a new day began, from which the shadows of the night rolled back forever.

CHAPTER LIII.

A LITTLE MESSENGER.

THAT day, Larry, with scarcely any aid, came down to dinner His strength seemed to renew itself strangely; but his old upright bearing, the dashing grace that belonged to his figure in the past, was entirely gone; he bent forward slightly as he moved along, and he slid his feet cautiously over the floor as if not quite sure of his footing. It was his sight which had suffered, as they soon began to discover; and that lent an uncertain air to his movements and a contraction to his brows, in the effort he made to look steadily, that still more altered the character of his face from what it had been. There was a new inmate in the household now, and he detected that at once, and asked, in a suspicious whisper:

"Who is she? what did she come for?"

His mother, who had rarely broken the solemn silence that had brooded over her face and mien since she had learned the story of poor Juliet's mystery, was slow to answer.

"Larry," said Bess, very impressively, and she leant forward and touched his hand as she spoke; "that woman is a nurse. She comes here to take care of a little baby we have. Shall I show you the baby, Larry? Will you like to look at it?"

He laughed foolishly, and looked all about him and on the walls and ceiling, then he turned again to Bess, and composed his face to seriousness.

"What is it?" he asked; "show it to me?"

She looked from one to the other, but neither Berkely nor his aunt spoke, so she rose, and going out, returned with the infant in her arms, and brought it up to him, and held it that he migh look upon it closely.

At first his face was awe-struck and very grave, almost to alarm, at the near contemplation of so tiny a living thing; then he breathed hard, put out his finger to touch it, which he finally

did, and growing bolder, stroked its velvet cheek very softly with his hand. The baby's violet eyes seemed to fix themselves upon him with its mother's glance, and the bud of a mouth broke into a smile under the motion of his fingers.

His whole face changed to an expression of intense, triumphant joy; his empty eyes opened wide, and he laughed outright and clapped his hands.

"Is it yours, Bess? shall we keep it?" he cried. "Don't let it go; say that you lost it, if they come for it, and I'll hide it for you till they go."

The earnestness of his voice, and the anxiety of the poor, meaningless face, that, like rippling water, held the reflection of any feeling but for an instant, was too much for his poor mother's burdened soul; she bowed her head and murmured:

"The Almighty Father has denied him the instinct of a brute creature. He does not know his child!"

Bess laid it softly in his arms.

"Kiss it, Larry," she said, gently, "while I tell you how it came here. An angel, who is spending the first day of her eternal joy in heaven, gave it to me to keep for you. Yes, it is yours. You understand that, I know; and by-and-bye it will have a voice to speak to you, and then it can tell you all the holy love the angel left in its keeping for you, and it can teach you how to feel it in your own heart"——

"And then I may go with it to the angel," said Larry, eagerly, finishing what Bess was trying to say.

"Yes, then you may go," said Bess, solemnly; and she laid her restraining finger on her aunt's lips, and pointing to the new sense that dawned like a faint flickering light in his face, whispered:

"Let the little messenger tell its own story in its own way—none of us will ever speak so well to him."

CHAPTER LIV.

LARRY IS CHIEF MOURNER.

THE house of Miss Waters, in East Grove Street, was closed, and long black streamers floated from the door and windows. Carriages blocked up the street, and the pageantry of a grand funeral was in progress.

Contrary to the ideas of the incensed Mrs. Waters, the demented wife of her unfortunate brother was to have a burial that corresponded with the wealth and position she had once graced in life. It had been out of that dignified matron's power to assail her little sister-in-law with reproaches, when she came to hear of her real end—and have the story of the odd substitution of the cloak and hood explained to her—for Mr. Joseph Waters had not deemed it best to confide the discovery of Juliet to his wife until every one else in the family knew of it.

Katie had been indignant at her death, but her coming to life again was, as she said, an insult to them all that nothing but the entire extermination of the tribe of Waters could ever wipe out. Her own husband was the Lot whom she rescued from the Sodom of annihilation which she wished to overtake his sister, who represented the sole remaining branch of the devoted family.

"And I am thankful to Providence," (to which power it was noticeable she never was grateful for any real good,) "that my necessary seclusion, though I have rather chafed at it, prevents the possibility of my being dragged over there to that mummery for the sake of appearances."

Mrs. Waters alluded thus to the last honors that were then in progress of being paid to her brother's wife, and she had her chair drawn over to the window, and a good-sized book of Italian views carried in, that she might choose her route during the projected continental tour, and drive that stupid horror out of her mind.

She was the only missing member of the family circle. All

were there. Mrs. Morrison had, in the face of all family precedents, determined that they who had welcomed the young bride should stand around her grave.

She had had a secret council with Dr. Windell, that resulted in Larry's being dressed in his mourning suit, and driven over to Grove Street with the rest.

She held his arm, even as she sate by him in the carriage, and he was very quiet, either from the change or some indefinable feeling of solemnity imparted by the mournful manner of the rest. They all alighted and went into the hall, where Barnes stood waiting, and pointed to a door at which they entered.

Charlotte was there and greeted them silently, as each fell into their place, as if in dread to break the awful stillness that reigned.

Mrs. Morrison, still holding her son's arm, gave him a seat that placed him with his back to all the rest. This was because, in the dim twilight of the other room, you might descry the shadowy outline of a coffin, and she dreaded to have his eye rest upon the face it held.

It seemed a useless precaution—he would never have know it as belonging to the girl he had wooed and won two little years ago. There was nothing of youth or loveliness about it now; strangely old and pinched in feature, it had wasted into a shrivelled dwarfishness that bore no stronger semblance to its past beauty than the leaves of an artificially preserved flower do to their garden bloom.

Turning sadly away as they kissed the cold blue lips, Bess and Berkely thanked heaven that the earth would soon hide this dumb reproach to human cruelty, and with one accord their eyes rested on the man whose hand his mother clasped, and who sate awed and wondering at the new scene around him. In its humiliation and pitiable helplessness, the change that had come upon him was quite as sad as the one he had wrought for others; but they who felt that, were those who looked at him, those who had gloried in and been half blinded by the light of his lost beauty, who had tried to believe that surely there must be some tender, merciful judgment wherein the offences of one so alluringly

handsome would meet no stern computation nor his short comings be dealt harshly with. For himself, he neither knew nor felt the loss of anything, but was completely content, inasmuch as remorseful fear, or whatever other slavish instincts had followed his wrong doing, were gone too, and he neither dreaded nor realized evil, nor had any remembrance of the past that made the present bitter.

Before the minister's first solemn words were spoken, a splendidly dressed woman, whose gorgeous garments contrasted painfully with the mourning robes of all around, glided in silently and bowed her veiled head with the rest. As they all knelt together, the rich texture of her gown brushed the sombre skirt of Mrs. Morrison, who, unconscious of her neighborhood, neither moved aside nor looked at her. It was well it was so ; not even the funeral ceremony of her daughter-in-law would have sanctified the presence of the vile actress, Addie West, to that indignantly virtuous woman. In her own heart she had always looked on the girl as a serpent in Larry's path, and had she known her story, would have entirely acquitted her son of more than weakness in yielding to temptation.

As it was, she never heard how, when utterly houseless and forsaken, the dead woman had known no other friend, and would have perished in the streets but for the bounty of the large heart that beat boldly under such gaudy robes. She did not hear that, dying, she had held a hand of hers and Bess, and raising them in both her own towards that heaven to which her soul was tending, prayed an equal blessing on them both with her last breath.

Mrs. Morrison saw her not, neither did her son, for when the closed coffin left the shadows and came out into the full summer sunshine, to take its last slow journey, and she touched the unconscious widower in token that he must follow, the actress stood weeping in the way, straining her great bright eyes after the casket that held the object of her tender care for past months.

Obedient to his mother's signal, he rose, but his sight was weak now, and he stumbled, catching the mantle of the watching woman to steady himself. She turned as she felt the motion, and seeing him, made a faint, stifled sound, and shrunk away in pity,

astonishment, and sorrow that swallowed up the wrath and vengeful wrongs of years.

He did not see her, or seeing, did not heed her, so mother and son went out together, and followed close upon the hearse, all the way to the cemetery, he watching idly from the windows of the carriage, sucking the head of his cane, or tapping it upon the seat before him ; and she looking steadily into the future, and praying silently that the wrath of Heaven might now be stayed, and the bruised reed be bent no longer.

There were none but mourning figures round the open grave ; the gay colors of the actress did not offend the eye here, for Charlotte Waters had implored her to remain away, lest Mrs. Morrison might be distressed by her presence ; but when returning, the party from Burleigh Place alighted at their own door in the sad twilight, she was standing motionless under a shade-tree, and watched the slow progress of the halting figure, stumbling up the steps, down which she had often seen him bound with the proud grace of an Adonis.

This was a farewell glance, as Bess and Berkely knew, for Addie West's talent was acknowledged by the public, and she had received flattering offers from a distant city, whither she was going for the coming year, and Barnes had already placed a bill on the two-story house round the corner from Myer's Lane.

CHAPTER LV.

"BESS MORRISON."

THERE was a great deal in the filling of the web of Mrs. Morrison's life and fortunes that was a mystery to her, and would always continue so to be till the end of all things. But these were the dark hues that had best be hidden by the brighter shades that Bess possessed the skill to overcast them with.

A few related to Larry personally. When his illness had be-

come known, and its serious character acknowledged, the door-bell of the house in Burleigh Place was hourly echoing with inquirers demanding to know who had charge of his business, and to whom should be addressed the claims for payment of his various out-standing debts.

They never went further than Bess's ears. She gave them all audience, and desiring them brought in, addressed to Berkely, took upon herself the settlement of Larry's last efforts at expenditure, that, considering the time and opportunity given him, were of a magnificent character.

It was nearly a month after Juliet's funeral, that Katie came to pay her first visit to her old home, and after a long sitting in her mother's room above stairs, descended to the parlor, to find Bess and Berkely there together, she blushing and laughing, and he very seriously counting out a roll of bank notes, with heavy figures on each. Katie was scandalized, a sensation that was easily experienced by her, when Bess was in question; but she was, to do her justice, more curious than shocked in her propriety, and noticing that Ellen O'Toole had been silently moving about in the shadow of the back parlor curtains, which she was arranging, the happy idea of learning the meaning of the scene through her aid instantly presented itself, and she smiled and looked discreetly away, while Berkely hastened to put up his money, and Bess to regain her composure.

Mrs. Waters had of late days changed her manner towards her cousin. She had been really shocked to see for herself the change Larry's strange affliction had wrought upon him, and of which no one had seemed capable of giving her a clear idea before; but she presently rallied, while her husband strove to console her, and telling him sharply that there was no combination of words that could annoy her as much as that absurd one, "mysterious dispensations of Providence," which the whole family seemed beset to utter, remarked that it was a blessing they had Berkely in the family now. He never had Larry's appearance, to be sure; but there was a certain something about him, a kind of style, that people began to acknowledge. She had been asked about him as rather a superior man among men, and

to tell you the truth, she meant to have him now up at the Park.

So Berkely was the consoling phœnix that sprang from the ashes of Larry's perished mind, and Katie smoothed his wings, and took kindly to him.

In pursuance of her design to read the transparent mind of Ellen O'Toole, Katie bethought herself to tell her something of the baby, as a theme likely to interest so old a friend.

"Ellen," she said, pleasantly, going out into the dining-room, where she was arranging the table, and leaving Berkely and Bess and Mr. Waters in the parlor.

"Ellen, you have never seen my baby, have you? He's a splendid fellow, and you really must see him."

Ellen smiled grimly.

"You know we've a baby ov our own, ma'am," she replied, "and you would have hard work to make us think it iver had an aiquil. We none ov uz would let it out ov our arms, if it wasn't for Miss Bess, who won't have it spoilt, she says."

Katie heartily disliked any mention of Juliet's helpless legacy. "It was just what they might have looked for from her," she said. "Not content with making a scandal, she had to leave this precious memento, to keep it in people's recollections."

She had seen it lying asleep on Larry's bed, and his bent figure watching it, with his finger on his lips, lest any one should disturb its slumber; but it touched no chord in her mother's heart, whose love was of that style that resented another baby's sharing the family's interest in hers, although she was content to have it draw the fostering strength of its tiny life from a stranger's bosom, rather than have it ruffle the exquisite laces that covered her own.

"It's a pretty little thing, Ellen," she assented, with apparent cordiality, "and Miss Bess and Mr. Berkely are very fond of it, no doubt. I suppose it was to buy it some costly gift, that he was giving her the money just now?"

If ever a pair of handsome eyes looked keen and questioning, hers did as she bent them on the gigantic priestess of her mother's kitchen altars, who now stood with her lips pursed up,

but a sort of irresolution quivering in their corners. They opened wide and Ellen laughed.

"Yes, ma'am, yer right; but ye wouldn't think it, if I didn't explain till ye."

She went over and closed the door, then came back on tiptoe, and whispered:

"Yer brother up stairs—Mr. Larry, I mane—was a real gentleman at spending the money, I hear. Sorra a bit of trouble the gitting clear of thousands gave him; if wastin' was worth that was paid for it, sure he'd be a rich man the day."

Mrs. Waters looked severely at the speaker.

"Ellen!" she said, softly and reprovingly.

"Yes, ma'am, I'm telling ye," said Ellen, cheerfully. "So ye see he's got into one debt and another wid gamin' and bettin', and club bills and wine bills—that there has jist been a steady shower ov thim all for the last week or two—and whin all comes to be settled there's nothing to pay the dues. Then Miss Bess wouldn't let yer mother know, for what she has will only kape hersilf and Mr. Larry's whims supplied, and the upshot is that Miss Bess has sold Mr. Berkely the house, and he's paid her for it, and the resates is to be a present to the wee baby, whose father's name they're kaping from the reproach ov dishonesty. She would do it herself, do you mind, and he wouldn't stop her when she said she wanted to go to him as poor as a beggar."

Ellen O'Toole raised her streaming eyes to the ceiling, and the expression of her great waste of countenance under the strong influence of sentiment and feeling, was such that her listener, perplexed and surprised as she was, by the disclosure, had to laugh outright.

"Och, but it's beautiful to see thim two; sure me eyes is never dry lookin' at them," she concluded, perfectly unconscious of Mrs. Waters' mirth.

Quite satisfied now on the subject of the money, that lady rose and walked slowly back to the parlor. She was a thorough philosopher, and always saved her self worriment by looking at the best view she could take of things.

"I might have known there would be debts," she said; Larry

couldn't keep out of debt if he had been worth millions. Yes, this certainly is the best way they could be settled ; if I had known of it, I should have been obliged to do something and come to Joseph for the cash—that would have been humiliating. Though he's a clever creature, it's a bad thing to leave the assisting of his wife's relations in any man's hands—it's a weapon he may strike her with covertly at any minute. Yes, yes, Berkely and Bess have certainly acted for the best."

Returning to the parlor, she found the whole family there assembled—Larry in his own peculiar chair, that was soft and cushioned as if to suit the failing strength of an old man, and in it he passed nearly all his waking hours, for he showed a strong objection to going abroad anywhere. Now he was playing with "Bess's baby," as he called the child, who in reality bore her mother's name, and in this pastime consisted the one great joy of his existence.

Bess would catch it up and run backwards with it in her arms, and then suddenly bringing it towards him, would let him kiss it, to snatch it away again. The little creature would laugh at the motion, but her poor father's delight was pitiable in its excess.

Berkely and Joseph Waters sate talking together, and Katie took a seat beside her mother, and looked at the tiny little zephyr socks she was knitting.

"They're very pretty, mother ; who would have thought that you should be making them for Larry's child ; you know he used to laugh so when you heeled his for him."

"Joseph, do look at my mother's ancient work-basket ; it is venerable enough to take a place in your museum of trophies. It must surely be years since you used it before, mother ?"

"Yes," returned her mother, sighing ; "it seems many a day since I had a quiet enough of mind to enjoy a peaceful employment like this."

"Those are pretty embroideries, ain't they ?" Katie's husband asked, as in the investigation of the work-box several pieces of delicate lawn, covered with wrought figures, fell out. Mrs. Morrison looked at them with melancholy pride.

"Yes, I was thought quite a hand at such things in the Mo-

ravian's school where I was educated when a girl. Your poor Uncle Terry, Katie, thought my needle-work was equal to India embroidery, and he knew all about it, you know."

"What is this?" asked her son-in-law, taking up a piece and examining it admiringly.

"Oh, dear, is that there? it's over two years since I put a stitch in it, and I thought it was laid away somewhere."

"It's a handkerchief," said Joseph, slowly, as he opened it out—"and what are these beautiful letters, 'Bess Morrison?'"

He spelt out the name, and looked up inquiringly, without appearing to apply it to any one.

Mrs. Morrison's pale face colored a little, and Bess stood still with the baby in her arms.

"It's a wedding-gift for my dear girl there," said her aunt, slowly. "She'll like it better, being the work of my old fingers, than if it were twice as finely wrought in France or India."

She sighed, because they knew, as they all did, that it was begun long before Berkely Morrison had sailed home from China, and that the bridegroom around whom all her fond hopes had centered then was weak and broken as that faded dream.

CHAPTER LVI.

SUNSHINE.

A YEAR and a day, that magic time proverbially given to joy or sorrow, watching or memory, before change is legitimate or the new usurps the place of the old, had come and gone in Burleigh Place before an evening paper, in its announcements, told of the marriage of Berkely Morrison and Elizabeth Saunders.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph were but just returned from abroad, where that circle of time had past for them among great old cities, in the oldest of which they had left a little grave six months before; for, despite the lace and the French nurses, the

baby did not grow and flourish as the expense lavished on it demanded it should.

Katie had been greatly distressed at this loss—greatly distressed ; but she was a judicious woman, and when, a month afterwards, they left Rome, she did her best to leave the memory of the perished little form it held in its classic earth behind her too ; for, as she knew in her heart, grief agreed ill with a person of her fair complexion, and she had already lost a great deal of her bloom during that fearfully dreary month.

Her husband, because, perhaps, that his color was not so material in its importance to him, was not able to find content as readily.

God only knew how much of that large heart was buried in that little heap of earth in the Eternal city ; he turned away from his last look at the shining little coffin, with a tender chord severed in its inmost depths that never was strengthened or made whole again, for this was Joseph Waters' first and last child.

When Katie was settled at home in West Park once more, and had seen her mother and heard from her of Bess's marriage, she at once accepted her invitation to come to Burleigh Place.

"I'll go down this afternoon, mother," she said, amiably, for I do long so to see the old home, and tell Bess with my love and good wishes that I shall not wait for her visit, but just run over at once."

This pleased Mrs. Morrison, and she told her niece, "that Katie was improved in every way, though she looked a little worn, but that was about the baby, poor thing."

Katie saw some little change even before she left the carriage to run up into the old hall once more. Berkely had, in his taste for improvement, given the house a finer front, and had balconies placed at the upper windows, that were now filled with a grove of roses and heliotropes, and where birds in bright cages sung in the sunshine, and gold fishes sparkled and darted about in glass globes.

"That is Larry's room," she said to herself, remembering what his mother had told her of the devices of Berkely for the pleasure of the poor creature. "They give up the best of the house to him ; well, really, they are an odd pair, an odd pair, indeed."

The "odd pair" met her the next instant in the door-way, and she kissed them both heartily, for Katie had really nothing in her mind to forgive them, and they looked so presentably well, that her family love quite glowed in her heart.

In the parlor, there had been a great deal of brightening, for Bess was passionately fond of elegant furniture, and Katie's critical eye saw nothing that it could fail to admire in the new fittings up of the whole establishment ; but neither the warmth of their welcome nor the pleasure she felt in finding no drawbacks to her determination to bring out the family publicly, could equal her astonishment at Bess's beauty. "The girl's grown positively radiant," she thought, "and she used to look so haggard." She glanced uneasily in a mirror. "I look a fright beside her ; what is it that makes her so handsome ?"

Bess could have answered her in one word—"Happiness."

Mrs. Morrison came in with Larry, who had nothing to boast of in the year that had gone, except an increased sense of enjoyment in his child and in childish pleasures.

He was so obedient to every word and look addressed to him, that Katie could scarcely tell whether he remembered her or not ; for when his mother said :

"Ain't you glad to see Katie, Larry—your sister Katie ?" he laughed and rubbed his hands, repeating :

"Oh, yes, sister Katie," and then went and kissed her.

"Where's Baby ?" cried Bess.

And her aunt replied : "She's in the garden with Barnes."

"Of course," thought Katie, testily, as Berkely went to bring her in, "it wouldn't be Bess unless she could have some fright or other hanging about the house."

"You have that man Barnes still, it seems !" she said aloud.

"Oh, yes," said Bess, pleasantly ; "he's actually indispensable

to Larry ; and besides, he thoroughly understands my husband's business, and saves him so much trouble."

"Your husband, Bess," repeated Katie, laughing. "Oh, how oddly that sounds !"

"Does it?" said Bess, simply ; "it seems very natural to me."

Berkely came in, leading by the hand the little one they called Baby, because no one had courage enough to try and become familiar with her mother's name again. She was a larger child than most of her age, and had full, frank, blue eyes, and an open, truthful face, that made her look older than the little creature she was.

Larry brightened the instant he saw her.

"Come, Bess's baby," he said, "come and play."

"Will you kiss aunt Katie, little one?" that lady conquered a feeling of bitterness to say ; for this child reminded her strongly of the little Roman mound, and she did not care to look at it.

Not so her husband ; when he came in an hour after and saw the child, his face wrought with feeling, and he took it up and pressed it to his bosom.

"That is already such a contested bit of mortality between aunt and Larry and Bess and me, that I rather dread a new aspirant for favor," said Berkely, laughing. "Baby," he added, tell Uncle Joe who loves you."

"Every one," said the child, simply.

"God bless you, my darling," said Mr. Waters, fervently. "And who do you love?"

"My Aunt Bess, and every one," answered Baby.

"Which would go to prove that Aunt Bess is not exactly everybody, and that Uncle Berkely rather thinks she's something superior," said Katie, laughing graciously.

Berkely smiled.

"I daren't praise my wife," he said ; "that would be in bad taste, so I cannot speak of her at all."

Mr. Waters sat down close to his mother-in-law.

"You are looking like old times here," he said. "There is a

happy change on every face but Larry's, poor fellow, and he seems contented."

"He's happy, thank God," said his mother, huskily; "and for us all, things are better now than I ever hoped to see them. There is no cloud without light, and Larry's has a bright lining, if we only look at it, and remember the past. Then Baby—but may be you don't care for children as we do?" and she looked at him inquiringly.

Joseph Waters choked down a rising pang at heart, and not being one to parade his feelings before the world, smiled sadly, and said: "I do like children."

"Well, Heaven only knows what this darling is to us. She would keep away sighing from heavy hearts, and ours have no cause to be that."

Mrs. Morrison kept her old place at the head of her table, and Bess took her usual seat at her right hand. There was a seat kept for Charlotte Waters, and soon she made her appearance, and greeting her sister-in-law civilly, (beyond that, Charlotte's Christian charity did not carry her), she embraced her brother, with a strong effort to control the feeling that was too much for both of them. But Katie was not in a mood to be jarred upon; she talked to all warmly, cheerfully, and even affectionately, having her reasons for being agreeable, as she imparted to Dr. Dacey, who dropped in during the evening.

"I am really delighted to find home so charming," she said; "and we all owe our dear Cousin Berkely more than we can repay, for living in this plain, and rather out-of-the-way style, to make my mother happy. You know, doctor, he's a very wealthy man, and one who, I have reason to believe, has won the respect and confidence of society here, for his sterling qualities, and for his able and efficient aid in city charities, improvements, and all kinds of liberal works. Bess is a fortunate girl, and they both deserve to be happy."

Her mother joined her, and hearing her subject, went heartily and tearfully into the theme. Katie looked around her; Charlotte was sitting by Larry's side, and they held the baby between them, cordially combining in petting her, and devoting them-

selves to her pleasure. There was something too large in Charlotte's nature to despise or hate a fallen enemy; she had buried her wrath against him with his lost wits and the memory of his wife's wrongs. The great blue eyes that looked from one to the other, now could see no painful anger on either face—all was forgiven between them; he remembered nothing, and she had succeeded in forgetting.

Bess was standing at her husband's side, and he was looking at the opposite wall.

"I'm thinking, aunt," he said, "that when they send home Uncle Terry's portrait, I'll have to have another taken to place here between Nelly's and Katie's. Should you like to see Bess as Summer? she seems the very impersonation of it to me."

The light of sunset shot down upon her golden hair, and danced in the warm depths of her dark eyes, as she stood smiling, with his hand upon her shoulder, waiting their reply.

"If there was anything brighter than sunshine, Bess darling, I'd call you that," her aunt said, earnestly; "but, Berkely, it's the name I've had for your wife in my own heart this many a long year and day."

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